

Report to Provincial Synod 2021 Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

- 1. Please provide a brief description of your diocese at this time, including statistics for Baptisms, Marriages and Burials for the most recent year for which you have prepared statistics. The year 2020 would be ideal, but 2019 would be great as well.**

The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador is comprised of 37 parishes with 71 congregations and is located on the Avalon Peninsula and most of Labrador. At the time of the writing of this report our church buildings are currently open for in-person worship with a maximum of 100 people.

Statistical Information 2019/2020 (COVID-19 has impacted the numbers due to periods of shutdown)

Baptisms	261
Marriages	56
Burials	472

- 2. Describe in detail any initiative by churches and members of the diocese that is producing real hope for the time ahead, especially after Covid 19.**

There is no doubt COVID-19 has changed us as a church. It has caused us to look at who we are and what is really important. We cannot ignore the fact that COVID-19 has seriously impacted human and financial resources. If we are honest with ourselves, we have noticed decline in these resources before the pandemic. The pandemic and its effect on the church now compels us to face these declines for the sake of ministry on all levels of the church.

Real hope for the time ahead can be seen in the following ways:

Diocesan Finance sub-committee is evaluating the financial health of each parish and its impact on the Diocese. This work will show trends within parishes and geographical areas. It will be an agent of hope because it will show the realities and the opportunities for meaningful and necessary change for existing and new ministries.

Enhanced parish conversations - shared worship and ministry resources.

Impact of online presence is keeping parishioners connected to their parish. An online presence is creating new parishioners and congregations because of live-streaming worship, Christian formation and bible studies.

E-giving has increased in parishes and especially in parishes who did not avail of this option before the pandemic.

3. Where did you experience “rejoicing in hope” at difficult times during this pandemic?

“Rejoicing in hope”

In March 2020 a provincial lockdown was put in place for NL. Parishes had only days to go from in-person to on-line worship. This quick adjustment was embraced by all parishes and multiple parishes joined together to offer worship and technical gifts. As time went on other ministry opportunities in Christian education and outreach projects were introduced. When in-person worship was permitted albeit with many restrictions, parishes adapted well to the health directives and re-learning how to offer sacramental ministry in safe ways.

Diocesan mission grants up to \$1000 per parish was offered and parishes could apply for the funds to help start or enhance an online presence.

Community partnerships with local restaurants to feed the most vulnerable. At the beginning of the lockdown restaurants donated excess food to local food banks. In addition to this some businesses provided a weekly meal and partnered with local churches for distribution. This enabled churches who were offering weekly meal programs to continue this outreach ministry.

Supporting refugees continued even though the arrival of refugees was delayed.

Home Again Furniture Bank a ministry of Diocese learned to operate in a new way.

Yearly ecumenical gatherings continued as online events – World Day of Prayer, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Parishes utilized their outdoor spaces to provide worship and youth activities.

Overall, creativity gave birth to new ways of doing ministry.

4. Despite our limited resources of time, energy and money, our relationships among dioceses of the Province continue to be important. Have you any thoughts about ways to gather and to support one another within our Province?

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have learned the importance of technology and the under-utilization of it in the past. While face to face gatherings are important for fellowship and networking, technology allows us to gather more often.

Technology may be the instrument that allows the Province to do some more focused ministry in the areas of outreach, youth, Christian education etc...