



Diocese of Fredericton

Followers of Jesus sharing hope and help in our communities and beyond.

Report to the Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada

June 2021

Description

Established in 1845, we are now 120 congregations within 72 parishes ministering across the civil province of New Brunswick. This report provides a snapshot of life and ministry in the Diocese of Fredericton over the past while and how we continue to “rejoice in hope”.

Statistics

	Current	2020	2019
Parishes	72	72	73
Congregations	120	122	126
Active clergy	75	74	78
Retired clergy	75	75	76
Total on parish roles	-	n/a	13629
Average Sunday attendance	-	n/a	4017
Baptisms	-	n/a	113
Confirmations	-	n/a	48
Marriages	-	n/a	64
Funerals	-	n/a	353

2020 statistics were not available at the time of writing because an extension had been provided to parishes to return these this year.

In addition to the ordained clergy numbers listed, there are seven lay persons, including licensed evangelists, in active paid ministry roles. We also have eight lay persons serving as volunteers in diocesan officer or representative roles as well as many others on diocesan committees and teams. There are 287 active licensed layreaders at this time. Besides the archbishop, there are ten synod staff members, seven of which are lay persons.

Initiatives Producing Hope

With the help of Rotary Foundation and local clubs, a diocesan initiative to provide a mobile medical clinic to the area served by our companion Diocese of Ho in Ghana, West Africa, is about to come to fruition. The \$100,000 diocesan share has been raised over the past year. The order for the vehicle has been placed with a Moncton company who will refit it as a clinic so it can be delivered to Ghana before the year is out. The field-army style unit will act as a laboratory, pharmacy and supply unit for all medical supplies and equipment. Tents will be carried on the roof racks to provide space for intake and examination of patients, and minor surgeries. The Ho Teaching Hospital will supply medical personnel and students to accompany the clinic, allowing for students to be trained in rural medicine. Priests will also be able to accompany the van to offer counselling services and prayer for patients.

More locally, two parishes in Fredericton are partnering with a city Housing First initiative to be landlords of tiny homes for currently homeless or vulnerably housed people. By providing a place to live and support services, the goal is to make lives healthier and more stable by removing the anxiety of chronic homelessness. The homes will be built and then essentially given to the parishes who will maintain and manage the spaces and most importantly, be in relationship with their tenants.

A church building in downtown Moncton see some of the homeless population setting up tents in the yard each summer. As in most urban centres, there is a lack of space and a fear for safety in area shelters. The parish is trying to walk what they see as the fine line between maintaining the property entrusted to them and living the example of Jesus Christ. Last summer the church actively welcomed people if they registered and signed a list of offers and conditions for staying there. The list offered a schedule for using the building toilets, shower and telephone, asked for respectful behaviour and control of garbage among other things, and stated times for two daily inspections. It outlined the need for safety, both for the church building and the people staying there, but also offered whatever assistance visitors might need.

Following a visioning session and a timely donation and bequest, a church in Saint John recovered land next to their building they had previously sold, including the former rectory. At the same time, an area food bank was looking for a new home. The former rectory has now been renovated to accommodate the food bank, including proper food storage space and a large, bright, accessible reception room; with space remaining for future church initiatives.

Aaron's Coffeeshouse opened last summer in Salisbury. They are a different sort of business, as their goal is not profit for profit's sake, but to provide employment and a skill set for those with Autism and other conditions that hamper securing a job. To help fund the effort of acquiring a better espresso machine, establishing a washroom, and eventually a commercial kitchen, the local parish has donated some funds from their Compassion Fund.

Individual parishioners have made donations as well, and there is a steady stream of Anglicans going in and out of the shop.

A very large basswood tree close to the Cathedral was suspected to be rotting in the inside and a hazard to the building. After it was cut down, the bulk of the trunk went to a carver from the local First Nations community. Basswood is known as a softer hardwood and has long been the wood of choice for indigenous carvers, coveted for its featureless, fine-grained, white wood that does not splinter or chip easily. A few metres from the upper section also went to a local carvers' group. We look forward to seeing what new beautiful things come from this old tree.

Since early 2018, we have welcomed four priests from Africa into incumbencies in the diocese. Two, with their families, have recently received their permanent residency status. They have been warmly welcomed in the parishes they serve. The diocese is the richer for the new ideas and ways, as well as individual specialities, they have brought.

“Rejoicing in Hope” During the Pandemic

We have found there is a balance between a lament over the loss of many of the things we hold dear, like gatherings and the Eucharist in two kinds (or even one kind), and seeing new opportunities to be more present with each other and with God. We believe we are better recognizing that the church is the people and not a particular building or event.

Across our province, churches have rung their bells and encouraged people to join in street events to both recognize medical workers and first responders, and as an audible action of crying out to God for his divine intervention. As one priest has put it, ringing the bells “also serves as a reminder to the public of the church’s active presence amongst them and God’s concern and love for all of us.”

Zoom and other online platforms have provided so much more access to people for regular worship and for diocesan learning events and meetings. Many of our clergy and parishes took up the challenge to provide some form of weekly worship online. And at the diocesan level, we have taken this opportunity to provide equipping and training events in a way we have never done before, including online forums on contextual mission and difficult topics.

At least one parish has discovered that their large hall in a building separate from their church, has gone from being their biggest expense to a pandemic gift which allows them to meet for worship because of the extra space. Other parishes have discovered they can rearrange things in their building to provide more long-term gains. Our larger diocesan camp, though not able to offer the full camping experience last summer, was still able to hire young people who worked to provide some much-needed upgrades to the facility.

Calvin’s Chapel was constructed within Fran’s garage. Fran, deacon-in-charge of the Parish of Madawaska, as well as some people in the parish, live just across the U.S. border, in Maine. Though Fran could at times cross the border, her American parishioners could not.

To create a space for this group to meet, when restrictions allow it, Fran and some of these folks converted her garage into a lovely place for worship.

We give thanks for our Parish Nurses, parish health teams and other qualified volunteers who stepped up to provide pandemic information and guidance to parishioners and helped to craft church building operational plans required by our provincial government.

Several parishes as well as diocesan-sponsored ministries transitioned their regular outreach activities to pandemic-safe ways of doing things or considered what new forms their outreach could take. Some switched to take-away meals to hand out or send to schools and shelters. Others committed to giving funds to schools and organizations in lieu. When schools closed, our inner-city ministry in Saint John changed from running lunch programs to delivering bags of food to homes where the children lived. Then, early this year they added the Family Connections ministry: packing and delivering boxes containing all a family needs for an evening of fun - spending time together, eating, reading, talking, sharing, and making memories. Inside a box are dinner ingredients, like pasta and sauce, vegetables and snacks, as well as a board game, storybook, craft, welcome sheet and questions for conversation.

Many of these outreach ministries found, that as a result of these changes, they reached more people either as recipients or as helpers. All, however, have also seen more clearly that it is not so much the food and other items provided that blesses others, but the fellowship shared amongst us, and they have grieved that loss through this time.

Overall, there has been much evaluation and reflection at the diocesan and parish level on our identity and role in “sharing hope and help in our communities and beyond”. What do we need to let go of and what new opportunities is the Holy Spirit putting before us?

Supporting One Another in the Province

Across our seven dioceses the pandemic has taken us into areas which we have not explored before, particularly with regard to technology and stewardship of many kinds of resources. There have been some joint initiatives such as the one between this diocese and Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island during Lent. In addition, there have been ecumenical meetings in different parts of the Ecclesiastical Province.

Although our dioceses differ due to their location and civil governance, there are many common factors such as the challenge of urban vs. rural ministry and the many opportunities for mission. One of the things we have noted here is the take up of virtual programming including services. Might we be able to support each other in developing something in this area? We have all had to encourage parishioners to continue to give financially without gathering for worship. What have we learned in this area that we might share? We have been sharing ideas in this diocese on an informal basis. Perhaps there is something we could do more formally between dioceses.