

Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

To create and sustain Christ-centered, mission-minded, ministering communities of faith.

Overview

Our Diocese serves over 19,000 Anglicans in 95 parishes and over 200 congregations in the two civil provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Island. More than one-third of our parishes are currently being served by clergy in part-time appointments. The composition of our parishes is: Rural – 42, Urban – 20, and Ex-Urban/Small town – 33. Our parish configurations are almost evenly split between multi-point (46) and single point (49).

Our Diocese is still in the midst of massive transformational change. More than half of our Diocesan staff team have begun their employment since my election as Diocesan Bishop in 2020, primarily due to retirements and restructuring of the Synod Office. The Covid-19 pandemic challenged us to explore new ways of gathering and sustaining Christian community and worship. We are continuing to learn and adapt as we find new ways of staying connected to one another and growing as disciples of Christ.

<u>Diocesan Statistics</u>	<u>2019 (pre-Covid)</u>	<u>2023 (from data received to date)</u>
Baptisms	213	134
Confirmations	59	34
Marriages	73	86
Funerals	829	854

Covid-19 had a huge impact on the ability to gather to celebrate foundational moments in the life of faith, but we have seen a large increase in recent years.

Initiatives Producing Hope

We continue to experience hope and are discovering new ways to gather as God's people in traditional, contemporary, and Fresh Expressions of ministry, as well as in new collaborative and ecumenical relationships. We are also streamlining Diocesan systems and structures to be more effective and efficient, and to ensure we exercise wise stewardship of our resources.

Ecumenical Shared Ministry (ESM) in Digby

As both the Anglican and United Church congregations in Digby, Nova Scotia, were struggling to fill part-time ministry positions, we began exploring the possibility of an Ecumenical Shared Ministry. After a series of thorough and prayerful meetings between denominational staff and Parish/Congregational leaders on the ground, and the establishment of a shared search committee, we launched our first ESM of this nature in May of 2023. Each congregation is feeling renewed and refreshed and with one shared, full-time priest/minister, each is receiving more than the 50% of ministry for which they are paying. They are growing in shared ministry and mission, outreach, Christian witness, education and discipleship, and in appreciation for one another. Since the launch of this ESM, at least two other parishes are exploring the possibility of hiring a shared priest/minister to serve them and their neighbouring United Church congregation.

Investing in Skills and Leadership Development - Recognizing that excellent communications and early conflict intervention are key to healthy parishes, we are launching a new initiative later this month called *Engage: Transforming Parish Dynamics*. *Engage* will train lay and ordained leaders in the skills of conflict management, communications, emotional intelligence, and facilitation. Following training led by an experienced Diocesan consultant, these 35 leaders will form an ongoing resource to the Bishop's Office for parishes needing external assistance in change/conflict management.

Equipping Lay Leaders for Enhanced Pastoral Ministry – Our Director of Mission and Ministry Development and a former Anglican Formation Director teamed up to offer a series of day-long workshops in all ten regions in our Diocese on Funeral Ministry. Focused on equipping lay leaders for an enhanced role in this vital and transformational ministry, *Guiding Light* offered theological and ecclesiological perspectives, as well as practical, skill-building tips and a binder full of resources. Over 200 people attended in all. Since then, well-attended follow-up Zoom webinars were offered on “Prayers at the Time of Death” and “Green Burials.” Lay leaders are hungry for training and equipping for ministry.

Expanding Support to Parishes via Technology and Improved Systems – Our new Financial Controller has initiated a series of steps to enhance information-sharing and training for Treasurers and other administrative leaders. These include quarterly newsletters, direct electronic access for parishes to online software for their Consolidated Trust Fund information, regular webinars on topics like changes to the Canada Revenue Agency's annual charity return, and regional in-person *Finance and Administration Road Shows* for parish leaders. He also led a series of Zoom webinars on Social Enterprise called *Faithful Ventures* to help parish leaders re-imagine how they might use their buildings and resources in partnership with community-based agencies.

Developing Missional Ministries and Growing Vocations – Our annual Missional Learning Cohort, *The Connectors*, is equipping its sixth group of missional leaders for pioneer ministries in their parishes and regions. Primarily comprised of lay leaders, these *Connectors* are going on to lead change and innovation. Some are discerning a call to new forms of lay ministry, or to ordained ministry, primarily as Vocational Deacons or Associate Parish Priests (non-stipendiary). Missional initiatives like *The Connectors* are bearing fruit.

Developing Collaborative Ministry Arrangements between Parishes – We are fostering collaborative ministry arrangements between parishes in many parts of the Diocese. Part-time ministry has been growing in our Diocese, with over one-third of our parishes served by clergy working half-time or less. This has often led to faster decline. We see renewed interest and energy in parishes working together to develop and equip collaborative teams of clergy and lay leaders for shared ministry and mission. This Fall, we are inviting leaders who've worked in Anglican dioceses in Canada and the U.S. to talk about the collaborative ministry arrangements that have worked well in their contexts. *Flourish: Collaborative Ministry Arrangements in the Diocese of NS and PEI* offers our clergy and lay leaders an opportunity to hear about these initiatives firsthand and then to consult with our presenters as they consider what might be possible where they live and work and worship. Signs of hope appear as people express a desire to work together and silos diminish.

Community Roots Day Camps – Each summer, parishes in our Diocese are invited to apply to host our Diocesan Community Roots Day Camps. Designed and led by trained, full-time summer students, and supported by trained local parish volunteers, these weeklong, themed camps provide an opportunity for parishes to build capacity for ministry with children and youth. Each Camp features activities like science experiments, games, Godly Play, worship, and Bible stories, and always includes a local component unique to the host parish. Many parishes who've hosted Community Roots Day Camps have built confidence to offer Messy Church or other family-based ministries. Last summer, one parish connected with the Immigrant Services Association of NS to promote our camps to new immigrant families. This provided opportunities for them to build relationships with their neighbours and learn about each other. These camps have a huge impact on the staff and volunteers, as well as the campers and their families and are just one of the ways we *Say "Yes!" to Kids*.

Developing Citizen Scientists and Addressing the Climate Emergency – In a unique partnership with Dalhousie University researchers and faculty, a local school, and government agencies, parishes along the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia have created an exciting Citizen Science project. Funded by The Anglican Foundation, PWRDF's Hurricane Fiona Resilience and Response Fund, and our Diocese, school children and adults alike are learning about and caring for their coastal environment and its ecosystems as Citizen Scientists. New relationships are being formed between the Church and the people who live and work and study in these local communities along the Eastern Shore. This project will have a direct and lasting impact on coastal ecosystems along the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia and will further work on preparedness for climate emergencies. It also enables the Church to come alongside people where they live, and to work collaboratively to address issues they care deeply about, like the coastal environment and all the creatures who make it their home.

Ways to Gather and Support One Another

While the benefits of technology in helping us to stay connected are unquestionable, I hope time and effort will be spent at our upcoming Synod to discuss re-introducing in-person gatherings to strengthen our relationships and help us to support each other in our ministries throughout the Province of Canada. In our Diocese we have significantly reduced the number of in-person meetings for our Diocesan Council (two times/year vs. six previously). Alternating between an in-person provincial synod and an online synod would help us to stay in touch, attend to the ministry and work at hand, manage costs and the environmental impact of travel, yet allow us to get to know each other over shared meals, conversation, face to face prayer, and worship. It may also help us to discover new ways of working collaboratively, as we likely face similar challenges and opportunities.