

**The Ecclesiastical Province of Canada
Report to Provincial Synod 2015
The Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island**

Background: The diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island encompasses, as the name implies, the two civil provinces named. Established in 1787 (as the Diocese of Nova Scotia), ours is the oldest of the seven dioceses forming the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada. We are currently composed of 24,338 members worshipping in 239 congregations grouped in 94 parishes, served by 153 clergy and 330 lay readers. For comparison purposes: in 1984 we had 133 parishes, 328 congregations and 72,014 members.

Over the past four years we have re-shaped diocesan ministries from committees emplaced in the canons of the Synod to ministry teams reporting to the Diocesan Council. This has allowed us to be more responsive to the changing needs for ministry throughout the diocese. In 2014 following the retirement of Bishop Sue Moxley, the Diocesan Council decided that the diocese would be served by one bishop for the foreseeable future. For almost 50 years the diocese has had two bishops. In 2014 we received 96% of allotment requested from parishes, the highest allotment compliance in a generation.

1) Describe in detail any initiative in the diocese (whether at the diocesan, archdeaconry, deanery or parish level), where there has been a coming together, which has built up or is building up the whole body of Christ?

In a very practical level there are three places in the diocese where parishes have come together to strengthen their ministry. In 2011 the parishes of Musquodoboit and Ship Harbour (Eastern Shore Region) came together in a shared ministry arrangement. It has been a tremendous success in redirecting energy to mission. As of January 1 2015, the three parishes which formed the Greater Glace Bay Pastoral Unit (Cape Breton Region) became the Collieries Parish. Removing much of the administrative burden from the shared ministry has allowed these congregations to focus more on ministry to the community. The third is the parishes of Parrsboro/Port Greville and Springhill/Joggins (Chignecto Region). Both parishes are at the point where they cannot sustain full time stipendiary ministry. As of November 2014 they entered into a trial shared ministry arrangement which is allowing them to search for a new full time rector, and has also encouraged the development of ministry amongst the members of both parishes. At the level of the diocese we have been focusing on the development of Healthy Parishes and Healthy Leadership Teams. The purpose of this work is not so that we can brag about having healthy parishes, but that healthy parishes are better equipped for God's mission. This work has included: program materials and support for 'Reimagining Church' and organising the 'Vital Church Maritimes' Conference for the past two years. We have also sent teams to the National Vital and Healthy Parishes Consultation for the past two years.

The decision to not seek a second bishop was not a financial decision so much as a desire to reshape diocesan leadership and our ability to support parishes in their mission and ministry. It is a time of great transition in our culture, economy and population distribution. Approximately one quarter of our

parishes are in some form of transition. We defined a role for a diocesan staff person to work with these parishes and to provide dedicated support for the programs aimed at the shift from maintenance to mission. We are currently interviewing to fill the position of 'Parish Vitality Coordinator'.

2) *What initiatives are under way, but have yet to bear fruit, or are still in the planning stage?*

Our diocese is one of four in Canada (Along with Toronto, Edmonton and Algoma) who are participating in a three year project known as the Inter-Diocesan Learning Community. This process was created by the Diocese of Liverpool and brought to Canada by the Diocese of Toronto. The project brings together leadership groups from the dioceses to work at intentional change towards more effective and missional ministry. Each leadership team is subjected to an intense process that asks, "What is?" (For example, what is the current situation in the diocese? What are the issues we feel are most important?) Then we are asked, "What can be?" This is when the teams imagine ways to improve the present situation. Finally, we are asked, "What will be?" The meeting concludes with each team sharing its plan, from its general direction to concrete implementation, with names of individuals responsible for each action. Nine months later, we report to the other dioceses on whether and how we have acted on our plans. Through reporting, we are gently held accountable to our peers. Our IDLC team, also known as the Innovation Group, developed the program for our recent Diocesan Synod. The Synod was a time to seriously question the barriers to growth and mission; how we will overcome them and how we will move forward. We divided the program into the same three areas that the IDLC is working with: What Is? What Can Be? What Will Be? At the time of writing we have only started to analyse the results of the Synod discussions.

3) *How can the Province of Canada help your diocese with these initiatives? What can our diocese offer to the other dioceses in the Province?*

We are open to learning from other dioceses about new and creative ways to reshape parish ministry for mission. The nature of our structure (every Parish is a separate corporation) means that our diocese lacks some flexibility in how we may bring parishes together.

We are prepared to share our experiences, and program materials developed by our 'Building Healthy Parishes Team', the annual Vital Church Maritimes Conference and possibly some time of the 'Parish Vitality Coordinator' once the position has been established.