

Diocesan Report: Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Synod 2015

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 or working together, which has built up or is building up the whole body of Christ.*

Diocesan Synod in 2014 had as its theme, ***You are the Body of Christ***, and was an opportunity for the diocese to reflect upon its past and present as it considered its future. Two areas were identified that need focussed work in the coming years and they were: Membership and Ministry. Our diocese continues to develop its existing programs with an emphasis upon congregational development and Christian education for adults and children. The Diocese shares with the Diocese of Central Newfoundland and the Diocese of Western Newfoundland responsibility for the operation of Queen's College and *Anglican Life*. All three dioceses also share in the administration of healthcare and financial matters through a Joint Committee Officer who oversees common investments through Anglican Joint Investments (AJI).

In April 2015, there was a Diocesan Conference called "***Growing Church***." This focus of this Conference was to give insight into the ministry of evangelism and how it benefits in helping churches grow. The Keynote Speaker was Dr. John Bowen from the Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism. He gave a public lecture titled: "*From Guilt to Joy: Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*," which addressed the question: Can we rescue evangelism from the negative stereotypes and make it something ordinary Christians can enter into with integrity, and even joy? The Conference attempted to show evangelism not as something to be feared but a skill that we can feel good about learning.

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

The Diocese is currently working on a plan to deal with the impact of shifting demographics as more and more of the Newfoundland population resides on the Avalon Peninsula. A declining birthrate and very significant out-migration to other parts of Canada also present challenges to parishes (particularly in the rural areas) as they seek ways to provide effective ministry in the future. With 83 active church buildings, there is room to consolidate some ministries in the years ahead. A growing edge for our diocese is in the area of partnerships and relationships beyond the institutional church. Additionally, there has been an increased emphasis upon education for both our clergy and laity. We hold two diocesan conferences every year.

One such partnerships is a proposed ***Furniture Bank***. The Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland, through its Society and Justice Committee and with leadership provided by the Church of the Ascension, has embarked on an idea to form a furniture bank that would serve the greater metro region of St. John's and Mount Pearl. The Diocese is taking the step to organize and launch the Furniture Bank, which has been identified in the community sector as a growing need but one that no existing organization has the resources or mandate to fill. The Society and Justice Committee intends to commit three to five years to forming the Furniture Bank and

overseeing its evolution into a registered charity that will ultimately operate independent of the Anglican Church. The committee's first goal is to operate a small, very targeted, short term offering of the Furniture Bank from Thanksgiving weekend 2015 through to November 30, 2015. The results of this test run will be used to design a more long-term, permanent operating structure for the Furniture Bank. The Mission of this enterprise is simply to match those who have furniture to give with those who need it. The Vision is to be a self-sufficient social enterprise that helps people living in poverty or adverse conditions to overcome the barriers to basic life needs.

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

The Province of Canada can help with these initiatives through existing structures and mechanisms for communication. We continue to have some challenges in the recruitment of clergy for our more remote areas such as Labrador and we are open to a conversation around ecclesiastical boundaries and overall church governance.