

Provincial Synod
Montreal, September 20 – 23, 2012-08-21
"Pruning to Bear More Fruit"

Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador Report

The Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador with its Cathedral and Diocesan Synod Office located in St. John's has nearly 50,000 members distributed throughout eighty-one congregations in thirty-five parishes. The most widely spread parish on the island portion of the Diocese has thirteen congregations grouped together in three units spanning a distance of 105 kilometres between its furthest points. In the Labrador portion of the Diocese, the Parish of Southeast Labrador with its eleven congregations extends from Lodge Bay in the south to Cartwright in the north, a road distance of 256 kilometres with travel to three of its congregations involving boat, ski-doo or plane.

Some of the Good News stories around the Diocese include:

- Godly Play started at The Good Shepherd, Mount Pearl in 2009. They presently have two "trainers" and nine "storytellers" for these children's series. As well enrichment days and periodic training sessions are offered to help leaders refresh and prepare. To date ten (10) other parishes around the Diocese have participated in the training sessions.
- The Parish of Bell Island has begun the process to build a new home that will serve as their Church Sanctuary, Parish Hall and Community Centre. This process has involved the closing of two oversized and inadequate buildings as well as the bringing together of two worshipping communities into one spiritual family. With plans in place, available money and a special financial campaign entitled "We will remember them" they anticipate having the building "closed in" by year-end.
- As of September 2012 there is a full slate of Clergy in Labrador offering Pastoral, Sacramental, Liturgical and Administrative ministry to all five parishes. At the 2011 Diocesan Synod lay delegates from Labrador were elected to a variety of Diocesan positions including General Synod delegates.

Some of the challenges facing the diocese lie in the area of vocations

- There are a low number of candidates discerning a call to ordained ministry.
- There are a relatively low number of priests applying for advertised positions.
- This is compounded by the fact that an increasing number of clergy are unavailable for full time ministry in rural areas around the Diocese.

There are a number of initiatives aimed at "cutting away, cutting back and redirecting to promote more vigorous growth". The pruning and redirecting of the Diocesan Family has certainly been a major focus.

- An undertaking of "pruning the vine" was launched at the Diocesan Synod in November 2011 when the current Governance Chapter 3 on *Diocesan Administration* was placed in reserve and a proposed Chapter 3 was accepted as a Pilot Project of Governance. Likewise the current Chapter 4 on *Standing*

Committees was placed in reserve and the proposed Chapter 4 was accepted for the duration of the project.

In preparation for synod there were clergy gatherings and lay delegate gatherings that offered *information sessions* and gathered *individual and group feedback*. Further to the preparation process, Synod 2011 offered a *digital presentation* showing an overview of proposed changes. Each section of this presentation allowed for *questions and answers*. The proposal was accepted for a trial period of up to but not more than four years.

The Diocese therefore is in a time of transition for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the governance of the Diocese. This involves an intentional downsized committee structure with membership selected for their expertise. It also includes an Archdeaconry model of ministry with each of the three (Avalon East/West, Trinity/Conception and Labrador) working at different stages within their unique situation. This is an ongoing work in progress with the pieces of the puzzle still being put into place.

- One of the basic needs in a process of pruning and redirecting Diocesan mission and ministry is the need to enter into an in-depth and ongoing process of communication from which all can be informed. Part of this process includes a *Clergy Residential Conference* in October 2012 devoted to the theme “Baptismal Living – Reclaiming of All God’s People”. This theme will also be the basis of the *Labrador Planning and Strategy Conference* held in Labrador in September and involving lay and ordained delegates. The *College of Deacons Gathering* in October 2012 will also focus on this same theme.
- Furthermore there will be a variety of educational opportunities within the Diocese to help with more vigorous growth and the empowerment of ministry. These include:
 1. *Diploma in Ministry and Associate in Theology* offered by Queens College
 2. *Bachelor of Arts in Theology for Discipleship and Ministry* offered by Good Shepherd, Mount Pearl in conjunction with Glyndwr University and St. Mary’s Centre in Wales.
 3. Ongoing *Training Workshops* for the Deacons and Lay Readers sponsored by the Diocese.
- St. Michael and All Angels, a downtown congregation, sold their oversized Church and began the process of building a new Spiritual Home in the heart of a newly developed/developing residential area of the City of St. John’s. This process has involved the *pruning of physical structures* while requiring the *intentional outreach and nurture* of all God’s people. The plan is to have their new Church building opened in 2013.

As a Diocese focused on Baptismal Living – Reclaiming of All God’s People the theme of “Pruning to Bear More Fruit” is both an encouragement and a challenge. It is a reminder of God’s call to us as well as a benchmark to measure our goal of promoting growth in mission and ministry in this part of God’s Vineyard.