

The Diocese of Fredericton Provincial Synod Report 2015

If I have not love, I am nothing. 1 Corinthians 13

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.*

The Archdeaconry Commission Process

During 2012 the Diocese committed itself to a period of self-reflection about the state of mission and life in general. This took the form of a series of commissions appointed by the Bishop. There was one for each Archdeaconry under the leadership of the Archdeacons with 2 lay and 2 clerical members. Each Commission spent the better part of a year doing its work and final reports were presented to the Bishop in spring 2013. During the process it became clear that an eighth Commission was needed to consider the work of the Synod Office and this was put in place. In addition the Constitution and Canons Committee was asked to review the governance structures of the Diocese to see if there are any areas where changes need to be made in order to facilitate the next steps in the review process.

Final reports were published and in the spring of 2013 a two-day conference was held under the guidance of Dr. Nancy Mathis from the Wallace McCain Institute at The University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. The purpose of this event was to discern themes which emerged from the reports and begin to move forward towards new ways of doing mission and ministry within the Diocese, while sustaining the good things we already have.

During the Villa Madonna consultation participants were asked to identify the biggest issues which are or might inhibit the progress of the recommendations made in the Commission reports. The following list emerged as what are considered to be the top six major matters:

1. We lack the belief and commitment to resource God's hope and mission through the Church
2. (There is) fear and lack of trust in each other, God and the process
3. Some do not grasp the severity of the problem
4. Communication is not effective. There are not conversations
5. Priorities are overly self-interested (personal/church/parish/diocese?)
6. Parishes are not committed to a shared vision and community

The process continues to move forward driven both by intention and expediency. We remain in the midst of a major period of realignment in the Diocese. Thirty-five of our sixty parishes have been identified as being in the midst of some kind of crisis. This means that they have financial issues and/or can't afford a full-time priest, are in conflict or have building issues. We are actively trying to work together to move forward in the work of mission and ministry.

Foundational and non-negotiable to the bishop's leadership is that "the Church is a Christ centered, Spirit driven community of love, fully participating in the Mission of God, for the cure of souls and God's glory." (ref: Bishop David Edwards' Discussion Paper, March 2015)

A Specific Example of One Archdeaconry Commission Process and a Practical Application in a Parish

The Fredericton Archdeaconry Commission Story (written by Mr. Jim Knight – Provincial Synod 2015 Delegate)

The Diocese of Fredericton commissioned a report on rural and struggling parishes which eventually led to all parishes completing a self-examination process – the Nicodemus Project. To build on these reports and to draw out findings that could help other parishes and the diocese, Archbishop Claude Miller commissioned each Archdeacon and a small support group to explore ministry across their archdeaconry and to imagine what ministry will look like in that archdeaconry in 2023. They were to prepare a debatable 10-year plan, facilitate that debate, and report to the Archbishop.

The Initiative: With the leadership of Archdeacon Patricia Drummond, the Fredericton Commission analysed the statistical information available for each of its 16 parishes and the Cathedral. A parish meeting was held with each parish and the Cathedral congregations. These meetings expanded on and explained the statistical information but, more importantly, provided stories of successes and challenges faced by each congregation.

The Commission met frequently between the parish meetings to analyse information being gathered, to identify opportunities for collaborations, and to provide feedback to parishes visited/tweak the process for the remaining visits. Draft reports were provided to each parish to solicit their feedback, comments and corrections. Second meetings were held with some parishes. The resulting Commission Report recommended opportunities for “Clusters” of 3 – 4 parishes to work together to share successes, strengths and resources. A few parishes were in specific situations and needed a little more time to explore whether becoming part of a Cluster would work for them.

Bearing Fruit: Some of the recommended Clusters have begun meeting and sharing ideas. They are engaging in pulpit exchanges and working together in support of both new and existing ministries. The Cathedral has become involved in the discussions. Resources are stretched, but there is recognition that there are opportunities for increased effectiveness of these resources as the Cluster concept matures. There have been many changes in clerical leadership around the archdeaconry and more have been announced. The maturing of Clusters has thus been slower than was first imagined. However, parishes that were not included in the initial Clusters have attended meetings as observers and are considering options.

The Future: The archdeaconry is very diverse. The sharing that has begun through the report and the follow up has spread better understanding among parishes. Success stories and challenges are being more widely spread. Resources with skills at reconciling and building on differences are being trained and made available. We need prayers and guidance for our leaders, as well as sharing of experiences elsewhere that may encourage our continued dialogue.

The Parish of Cambridge-Waterborough, Archdeaconry of Fredericton Report Story

(written by Mrs. Debora Kantor)

This five point parish was struggling. Each point functioned quite independently but with only 10 – 20 regular attendees at irregularly scheduled services. Only a few die-hard parishioners would travel to other points for services. Clergy were seldom discouraged, but for various reasons over the years they came and went, eventually with more frequency.

Early attempts to breathe life back into the Parish included scheduling services on a rotation around four of the five points. (One church was in very poor condition and was used only for funerals.) This was somewhat successful as it resulted in parishioners getting to know each other better and sharing around food and drink after the service. However, none of the churches had washrooms or running water. Scheduling became a bit of an issue and parishioners would become frustrated and use it as an excuse to revert to attending only their own church when services were scheduled there.

The Initiative: The Church of the Good Shepherd, with limited assistance from the other points but with strong support of the ACW, built a small addition and negotiated to share a well with the local Historical Society. The addition served as a Christian education/meeting/coffee room, with a kitchenette on the side – and included a washroom. Good Shepherd was geographically central and has resulted in “expansion” of the parish boundaries to the southeast and southwest. While there was initially some resistance, all services were eventually scheduled there with only occasional special services at the other three points. The Parish had agreed to demolish the fifth church.

Bearing Fruit: Eventually, “critical mass” was achieved, and it became commonplace for most parishioners to attend services at Good Shepherd and to stay and enjoy fellowship afterward. New leaders have been inspired to take training and to step out with new initiatives that were especially encouraging to young people. The Parish developed a Family and Youth Ministry strategy and received funding from *Foundation for Life* to hire a part time person to implement it. It is now fully funded by the Parish. This ministry includes running “Kids Church” during and as part of the Eucharist; After School modules including Godly Play; a large summer Vacation Bible School, and supporting and sending large numbers of young people to Camp Medley – 27 are signed up so far for this year. Messy Church has been running regularly. The Parish supports and provides leadership to Alpha and Alpha Teen ministries. Most recently, the Parish has cooperated with the neighbouring Parish of Gagetown to share a Priest-in-Charge.

The Parish of Cambridge-Waterborough exhibits vibrancy and goodwill among the various ages that attend. “Church” and especially Messy Church, “invigorates us”. VBS and other initiatives are well supported by parishioners.

The Future: The Parish will be losing their Priest-in-Charge shortly. Will their new lay readers and other leaders be able to soldier on successfully? They will need your prayers, but they are also encouraged when other small parishes take all or parts of what they have done and try them. Pray, emulate and share their story – and tell them <http://www.parishofcambridgeandwaterborough.com> about it!

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

The top six major matters identified during the Villa Madonna consultation days of the Archdeaconry Commission Process continue to be intentionally addressed as we embrace the reality of the time and place that we currently find ourselves sharing in ministry. The recommendations of the Archdeaconry Commission Reports are continuing to be considered and applied as ministries unfold.

The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion are becoming central to our work together. These marks are: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to seek to transform unjust structures of society; to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation; and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury provided a helpful synthesis of these when meeting with the new bishops of our Communion earlier this year. He said, “Jesus is always to be proclaimed, we are to wash the feet of others and we are to work for reconciliation at all levels. In very basic and practical terms, we are to remember the centrality of Jesus, be those who serve and be reconciling.

Our current and future initiatives will be centered upon the above noted vision and ministry truths with our areas of focus outlined below.

Prayer

- The bishop's walking pilgrimage through an Archdeaconry is at the time of writing this report still in the planning stages but it is hoped that it will build up individual parishes there as well as provide a sense of working together for the Archdeaconry as a whole. Bishop Edwards will spend two weeks walking daily from church building to church building, walking with, meeting with and praying with parishioners and other community members. We wait to see how God will use this initiative. The plan is to continue this pattern each year in one each of our seven Archdeaconries.
- Development of a common diocesan Lenten bible study for the past few years in a format for either individual or group study.

Education

- Ministry development, education and training discussion paper presented to propose more flexible patterns for the ministry of both lay and ordained. It appears that our current patterns are no longer appropriate for the demands which are being placed upon us. We need to create multiple opportunities (spiral curriculum) and faith development access points so that all of us, whether currently members of congregations or those asking questions about meaning and faith, can engage in God's universal call to relationship, worship and service.
- Directing funding and budgeting towards education and formation
- Offering Vocations Days
- 12 12 12 (3) to begin with groups 1 and 2 continuing to meet on their own.
- Bishop is offering deanery level one-day "See Through the Scriptures" courses. It is hoped that this becomes an on-going initiative with courses held regularly by local trainers.
- Godly Play continues to be introduced to provide Christian formation opportunities for all ages.

Realities of Ministry in the Diocese

- Embracing and naming the realities and contexts of ministries and encouraging a hopeful future.
- Have trained twelve people in conciliation. They will be deployed in teams to come alongside parishes, individuals and ministry situations where there is conflict. The hope is that with a different approach, the real issues might be dealt with so that mission and ministry will be the focus.
- A Parish Development Officer description has been created; however, we haven't had any successful candidates to date, and the search continues.

Counting

- We are questioning the things we have traditionally counted (i.e. attendance, finances) and wondering if we ought to be counting other things (i.e. parallel church opportunities)
- Our upcoming annual Stewardship Conference will focus upon and celebrate our blessings. We want to start telling a different story, one of hope.

Take Risks

- Central Saint John Community Ministry: Two clergy serving as Community Priests in uptown Saint John (a church plant)
- Tri-parish initiative
- Moncton Suburban parishes ministry
- Investigating the possibility of developing a "mission district" where traditional parish structure is no longer working
- Parish of Tobique two-year joint ministry with the United Church of Canada

Mutual Accountability

- Review of parish budget support took place and a revised method formulated for the Shared Ministry Budget assessment. Providing support to develop a plan to deal with trending shortfalls as these may be an indication of deeper issues impacting mission and ministry.
 - Implementation of new Safe Church Regulation and Policies
3. *How can the Province of Canada help your diocese with these initiatives?*
- Identify resources (prayer) which enable us as Christians to go to greater depths in our relationship with God, empowering us to be Christians always and everywhere
 - Developing an approach and resources to better prepare people for ministry
 - A sharing of spiritual formation initiatives as well as combining resources
 - A sharing of other effective models of ministry appropriate to our contexts
 - A sharing of stories and processes of taking ministry risks
 - Identifying ways to develop mutual accountability within ministry contexts
 - Effective communication strategies
 - Help in identifying what to count in our ministries

What can your diocese offer to the other dioceses of the Province?

- Our Constitutions and Canons Committee are trying to make our canons more comprehensive and flexible around the related topics of Episcopal incapacity and interim administration of the diocese. This work may result in canonical language that would be useful to other dioceses.
- Have begun a new focus upon youth and intergenerational ministry as opposed to strict focus upon youth ministry.

*Compiled by The Ven. Cathy Laskey
Secretary of Synod and Executive Assistant to the Bishop
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