



The Diocese of Montreal Anglican Church of Canada Report to Provincial Synod 2012

1. Provide a brief description of the diocese

Our diocese comprises the island of Montreal, most of the Laurentians (up to Mont-Tremblant), some of the lower Outaouais region, the South Shore of the Montreal Region, and part of the Eastern Townships (down to but not including Sherbrooke).

The Anglican Diocese of Montreal celebrated its sesquicentennial in 2000 but there has been an Anglican presence in what constitutes the Diocese since 1760. From our oldest parish in Sorel to our newest francophone initiative in that same place, through industrial change and demographic shifts, the Diocese still endeavours to reflect the changing face of Anglicanism in Quebec. One hundred years ago, the rosters showed the diocese comprised one hundred and twenty six (126) clergy, ninety two (92) of which were engaged in active parish work; parishes numbered eighty five (85) with one hundred and ninety one (191) congregations and there were eighty eight thousand and three hundred fifteen (88,315) individuals on the parish lists. Today, we have one hundred and thirty eight (138) clergy, eighty two (82) of which are active in parish work; parishes number seventy two (72) with one hundred and twenty (120) congregations and there are fifteen thousand, one hundred and five (15,105) individuals on the parish lists.

2. What good news is taking place in your diocese?

There are signs of definite hope, growth, vision and parish based understanding and development of mission. In 2010, our previous Strategic Plan of five years came to an end but a new 5 year Ministry Action Plan (MAP) came into being with significant consultation throughout the diocese.

The Marks of Mission have increasingly begun to form the basis of understanding for parishes which may previously have struggled in contemporary society to understand their purpose.

In 2011, a group of young clergy and theological students came together to create “The Advent Chapel” in the now closed Diocesan Book Store. The space in the underground mall below the Cathedral was a unique location for ‘sanctuary’ for shoppers to come for spiritual nourishment and peace.

The “Youth Ambassadors Program” was “re-newed”. They are a group of youth from across the diocese who participate in ongoing leadership and spiritual training. They represent our diocese with our partners: at APCI (Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior), at the CLAY gathering (Canadian Lutheran Anglican Youth Gathering), and possibly next year in Masasi, Tanzania.

The Diocese of Montreal and The Diocese of Quebec have been engaged in an ongoing dialogue (QMPI—Quebec Montreal Partnership Initiative) to explore ways of working together in our ministry. We have examined areas and concepts that range from considering sharing of staffing resources to payroll to programmatic cooperation.

The Diocese of Montreal continues in partnership with APCI and with the Diocese of Masasi, Tanzania.

Our Diocese continues to raise up the ministry of PWRDF, Partners in Ministry and Ministry of EcoJustice. The ministries of Tyndale-St. George's, Mile End Mission, and St. Michael's Mission continue to work diligently as well as many parish based community support programs.

In the past three years, in addition to continuing Fresh Start for Clergy and for Congregations, among other things, we have introduced Natural Church Development; developed a Mutual Study of Ministry; have begun the preparation process for a Feasibility Study to determine whether we are 'ready' for a Financial Campaign; hired a Congregational Development Officer and a Youth Ministry Consultant; redeveloped the Clergy Handbook (policies, procedures and practices).

3. What challenges is the diocese facing?

Some congregations are struggling financially as members of either or both of the community or the parish decreases and demographics shift. Beautiful but old buildings threaten to be a liability as a result of maintenance costs however we endeavour to ensure that they are in fact an asset. In some ways, rather than simply renting out their buildings at times when they are not in use by the parish, some parishes are looking at creative ways of developing their properties that will provide both a sustainable income but also a viable and valid ministry to their communities.

Some congregations are in process of discerning God's mission for them in their context. The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Montreal is considered by many in Quebec as the "English Church" in the predominantly Francophone society where the secularization and rebellion against the previous powers of the Roman Catholic Church and its political powers continue. We endeavour to understand how we (as a minority—both as church and as Anglophones) might provide ministry and mission to the Francophones in our midst—indeed to understand what French ministry might be aside from providing worship in French.

4. In what ways has the diocese "pruned the vine", cut away or cut back, or redirected resources, in order to promote more vigorous growth and more fruit in other areas of mission and ministry? How can your experience be of value to or an example for the rest of the Province?

It is important to respect that the Vine-grower removes both those branches that no longer bear fruit, and also branches that are still bearing fruit in order to create fruitfulness. This is perhaps something we are only now coming to fully recognize.

The Diocese of Montreal has made difficult choices for the sake of fruitfulness. These choices including cutting in some areas of ministry and mission. Our Synod Office staff structure was changed dramatically—cutting back in some areas but boldly investing in other areas that we felt were in the direction of new growth. Our Synod has continued to pass a deficit budget over these past three years—however this deficit has decreased by 75%. It would be possible to balance the budget, however Synod has bravely chosen to take bold steps in hiring new leadership in areas of congregational development and youth leadership. Some areas of ministry and mission in the diocese including some subsidies and grants were adjusted or cut. This being said, the Diocese is a very exciting and creative place these days and this is in large part because of these choices. New programs and areas of growth have been identified. Five churches have closed however out of these, 2 new church "plants" or amalgamations took place and are doing well.

As we strive to listen to where God is guiding us as a body of believers. The theme of the 'Healthy Vine' is in the forefront of our minds/hearts as we continue to use M.A.P. as a spiritual compass.

In investing financially in new leadership, our goal is to continue to raise up other leadership whose primary focus is encouraging and equipping others to utilise their gifts according to the parish context in which they find themselves (in other words to join in the mission of God in our own parishes wherever and however that may present itself to us).

It is our prayer that as this new vine continues to be nurtured, a new healthier, fresher fruit, will be produced that will yield a wine that none of us may have tasted previously. It is from this new wine that we hope to build a sustainable future for the work of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Montreal.

Parish Based Youth Ministry

It is indeed exciting times in the Diocese of Montreal with regards to ministry for and with young people and those who wish to provide an opportunity for them to flourish. Our vision is that every parish should be pro-active in its youth ministry and their ministry to those who wish to provide an opportunity for youth to flourish. Hence 'supporting & resourcing' sustainable Parish youth ministry is something that is being prioritized.

It is truly special when a parish creates a safe space for young people to grow as individuals; a supportive & affirming environment where youth workers can reflect on their practice; a place where parents are empowered with the latest knowledge & skills that assist them navigate through the many issues that affect their children; and where the Priest is given the support, encouragement and resources needed to provide relevant ministry to young people.

In partnership with the Diocesan Youth Ministry Team, Parishes will be encouraged and facilitated to continue on their journey of responding to the unique needs of their community contexts.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MINISTRY ACTION PLAN (MAP)

Guided by our Ministry Action Plan (which is our response to the Marks of Mission), undergirded by solid research (The AMB Report), and shaped through grass-roots consultative processes, we have chosen to invest in a far greater programme of direct support to parishes – even when this means restructuring our staffing and continuing to live with a deficit budget. Our belief and trust is that through MAP and the staffing that makes it possible, we will become healthier and more vitally missional.

MAP directs us to build and release capacity and energy for mission parishes and community ministries. In doing the analysis that set this priority, we realized a number of crucial things that are directing our stewardship of people, energy and money.

- We need to prune and invest at the same time. Pruning alone will only support less of the status quo. To participate actively in vigorous growth means investing in people who know how to tend vines.
- Our strongest churches need significant support to stay strong. Strength is not a static state. Clergy and lay leaders need access to congregational development consultancy/facilitation, analysis, research, tools and training. They are generally active users of these resources. There is no question but the leadership of these parishes must be actively supported.

- We need to continually provide space and opportunity to take the time to explore what God is doing within and around us; where our clergy, theological students and lay leaders can experience something of the promised fruitfulness. We do this through a variety of hosted gatherings, large and small, where abundance and hospitality are practiced. People are invited to pray, learn and talk freely with each other sharing challenges, hunches, inspirations, and insights. New ministries are born here.
- Some parishes, even some that are still bearing some fruit, are no longer able to imagine having the energy and capacity for mission. If they are in strategic locations we need to be able to invest in their future. If they are not, we need to help them get to their future faster, making difficult decisions, and finding respectful and dignified alternatives such as merger or closure.
- We are increasingly aware that our church leaders need to be liberated from the burden of property management. It is becoming increasingly urgent that we find new ways for our properties to either become self supporting, or become income streams for ministry. This will also lead us to pruning, losses and change for the sake of mission.

Submitted by:

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