

48th Session of the Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada

Presidential Address, June 8 2018 – Leadership For Mission

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.” St. Luke 5:11

And with that brief statement the lives of these four men change the course of their lives and the course of the world. We would know nothing of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth if it were not for the witness of these disciples turned Apostles. When we read the gospels we are encountering Jesus, the one sent by God, the very image of the unseen God, we read of the way that Jesus fulfills God’s mission to the world, we also read of how Jesus formed a community and formed leaders to carry out this same mission. *“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’”* (Matthew 9: 35-38) The answer to that prayer was for Jesus to give authority to the twelve and send them out. We might call this the first instance of Supervised Field Education. It prepared them for the later commission given to them to teach, heal and baptise, as they were led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. After the Ascension the tiny community of Christ followers waited to see what would be. When the Spirit was manifested to them it wasn’t to make them feel better. It was not the dove of peace that rested on them, at least not in Acts chapter 2, instead it was the disturber, the interpreter, the enthuser. The witness borne by the disciples was disruptive and world changing. Is there anything comforting or safe about the sound of a violent wind or the sense that everyone’s head is on fire? Pentecost was a moment of risk, a moment when their responsibility for engaging in God’s mission becomes real.

God’s Call to Mission

What is God’s mission? *“So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,* not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”* (2 Cor. 5:17-20) St. Paul says that the mission is reconciling the world to God. Desmond Tutu writes in *“God Has A Dream; A Vision for Hope in our Time”* of the kind of community which reflects God’s mission. It is a community where “people matter more than things, more than possessions: where human life is not just respected but positively revered: where people will be secure and not suffer from the fear of hunger, from ignorance, from disease; where there will be more gentleness, more caring, more sharing, more compassion, more laughter; where there is peace and not war.” (Desmond Tutu, *God Has A Dream*, New York, Doubleday, 2004, p.63)

Mission is in our Being, Doing and Living. Every diocese in this province began as a missionary diocese. These diocesan structures were supported and staffed from outside. (usually by the Society for the

Propagation of the Gospel or the Church Missionary Society). In 597 Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine to England to evangelize the English. The only reason that there is an Anglican way of Christianity is because someone engaged in mission and Evangelism.

It is probably safe to say that for most of our history, the Anglican Church in Canada has grown through immigration and procreation. Mission or Evangelism has never truly been top priorities for Anglicans in a society that encouraged and supported church membership. The one exception was our involvement with the Indian Residential Schools, which was at best a mixed blessing and as the TRC has shown, was in many places a horror. Through most of our history our church in this country was seen as a strong supporter of a stable society and the status quo.

If God's mission is to reconcile people to God's own self, the state where that reconciliation is fully realized - is God's kingdom. God's kingdom is not a mirror of our civil society. God's mission is to the whole world, it is not limited to the church. Our reason for being is this mission. The church by its very nature is missional.

"How do we keep the main thing the main thing? How will we insist... that God's mission is our reason for existence...? The structures of this church are resources for God's mission, but they are not God's mission in themselves... Jesus' passion was and is for God's dream of a reconciled creation. We're meant to be partners in building that reality throughout all of creation." (Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori Opening Address, General Convention, TEC, 2009)

To quote our own Primate- In a congregation- primarily organised around developing and maintaining its own inner life – becoming a movement for mission is simply not possible unless there comes about a radical shift from the culture of membership to the culture of discipleship.

The culture of discipleship is fundamentally a way of being, a lifestyle. Mission is not about strategies and activities for success of the church as an institution. If, when considering any course of action, we ask in any way: how do we benefit? Then the matter under discussion is not missional. "Concrete missional actions arise out of our being in mission, being in a permanent openness to God and in God to the other" (Christopher Duraisingh, Anglican Theological Review, Winter 2010)

Some of our most influential communal statements recognize our foundation as a missional enterprise. Our baptismal liturgy asks: "Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ? Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself? Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?" (B.A.S. p. 159)

The Rule of Life from the Book of Common Prayer encourages all men and women to consider how they "bring the teaching and example of Christ into their everyday life, the boldness of their spoken witness to their faith in Christ, and their personal service to the Church and the community." (B.C.P. p.555)

'The Marks of Mission' of the Anglican Communion challenges and encourages the church:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

It is the first two of the marks of mission with which we struggle. We are good at 'Responding to human need', whether through the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund or a local community initiative. Finding effective ways to advocate for the marginalised and for the whole of creation as we find ourselves more marginalised in the current Canadian cultural mix, is something which we are steadily working on, but proclaiming the Good News outside of liturgy,...teaching, baptising, and nurturing new believers... that's a bit of a problem for us.

The missiologist Lesslie Newbigen writes, "Christians thrive when they allow their lives today to be shaped by God's tomorrow. We feed the hungry because in the kingdom all will be fed. The church has a vocation to be a sign, witness or foretaste of God's kingdom."

Today we face increasing secularisation, marginalisation, the consequences of a failure to disciple or to take seriously the great commission. The societal supports for the mainline Christian churches in this country have all but disappeared. Instead we face the growth of suspicion or the condemnation of irrelevance to people's lives. Even as resources shrink, we face the growing need to minister in multicultural and multi faith contexts, a reality even in some of the smallest communities in this Ecclesiastical Province. We face the challenge to translate the language of faith and of worship into an idiom that can be understood in a Twitter generation, while longing to hold on to the beautiful language which has for so long defined us as Anglicans.

Last year when the bishops of the province were asked to write a paragraph reflecting on leadership in preparation for the election of the Metropolitan, I wrote: "My experience of episcopal ministry as suffragan, coadjutor and as diocesan, has been one of journeying with people in transition. Working with those discerning a call to leadership both lay and ordained, with communities experiencing demographic shifts and parishes struggling with what it means to be faithful in this time and place. That is really not surprising as I believe that our faith calls us to be in a constant state of transformation. I have had to learn to live with the anxiety of the journey, not seeing clearly what the end point might be, knowing that what is required of us in this moment is faithfulness to the God who comes to serve not be served."

As a very young priest I was given responsibility for a parish and was told by my bishop "Here is a parish - go care for it". Now I say to new rectors "Here is a parish - go build it." The way before us is challenging on several fronts. The resources to maintain church in the manner to which we have become accustomed, are decreasing. The way that we have expected people in our communities to come to us

to find the good news of Jesus Christ, simply no longer works as a significant tool of mission. The way that we raise families, the way that we work, often no longer supports our traditional patterns of worship and Christian education. If we want excuses for why the church is getting smaller, we don't have to look too hard to find them. If we accept the principle that God has a mission and that God has a church, whose reason for being is that mission, then does God want a dying church? ... Well in some ways the answer to that question may be yes, there are some things that need to die. But the church of God, spirit inspired, is not going to die.

The Role of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada

As we gather for this 48th session of the Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada, we are focussing on "Leadership for Mission". I hope that you have had a chance to read the reports from the dioceses about various missional leadership initiatives that are underway. Over the next two days you will hear four presentations (counting this one) about Leadership for Mission. Following each presentation there will be an opportunity for discussion in table groups about the presentation. Our hope is that these discussions may provide a means to identify a role for the Province in Missional Leadership.

The Constitution of the Province requires the "providing of occasions for fellowship and of a forum for the consideration of topics of particular concern within the Province, including: faith, witness, ministry and liturgical worship; the political, economic, educational and social dimensions of the Ecclesiastical Province; both those common to the whole and those of a more local nature;..." it speaks of promoting teamwork and the areas of legislative authority, of representations to civil governments and supervision of ACPO.

Everything else which the Constitution calls us to do is of an internal nature: election of bishops and the Metropolitan, discipline and oaths of clergy, diocesan boundaries, and the election of officers and organisation of the Synod itself. There is very little in the Constitution which speaks of the missional nature of the church. This is not terribly surprising; it reflects the ecclesial reality of 1860.

The 'Declaration of Principles' of the Province (1861) says "It is our earnest desire and determination to confine our deliberations to matters of discipline, to the temporalities of the Church, and to such regulations of order, or modes of operation as may tend to her efficiency or extension;"

While we may be proud of our history, having been founded 30 years before the General Synod, we must be realistic in terms of what the Province may deliver within our mandate. We do not have any staff. We have a budget sufficient to gather the Synod and to get the Archbishop where he has to go. There is no appetite to increase that budget. We have tried to work in different patterns. We have in the past two triennia used money that was originally intended to gather the provincial council, for programing directed toward youth ministry- the Train the Trainer event and then the support of "Ask and Imagine". The budget that will be presented tomorrow assumes that we will continue to support some project or initiative. We have encouraged parishes of the Province to partner with parishes in the Diocese of the Arctic and we have supported the Princess Basma Hospital operated by the Diocese of Jerusalem. One thing has become clear, while the province may access the programming capability of our constituent dioceses, we have no structural way of delivering programs. Once again, this reflects the

structure of the church in 1860. I believe that programming was never envisioned as a responsibility of the Ecclesiastical Province.

Over the last 6 years we have reduced the number of Synod members and members of the Provincial Council. This was in line with the request of General Synod for all levels of the church to look for organisational efficiencies. In the past three years the Provincial Council has met twice, once at the close of the last Synod and once mid-term in a test of an electronic meeting platform.

I discovered last year, after I was elected Metropolitan, amongst the people of my own diocese, that there is a massive misconception of what the Ecclesiastical Province is of Canada is, or an almost complete indifference to the Provincial structure. Our Ecclesiastical Province covers five civil provinces and three different cultural contexts – Quebec, Maritimes and Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe that if the Provincial expression of our church is to have any relevance to the ongoing faith life of Anglicans in Eastern Canada, we must take seriously the ways in which the “political, economic, educational and social dimensions” of our lives have been changing. Like every other gathering of our church, parish, diocesan or the General Synod, the gathering of the Province needs to be the place where we share the ways in which we are seeking to engage God’s mission in these times and how we might best resource the faith communities where disciples are made, nurtured and formed.

Don Mills, chairman of Corporate Research Associates, reflecting on his firm’s ongoing surveys of Atlantic Canadian public opinion has written: “One consistent theme has been the continuing resistance to change and the strong affinity for the status quo, which is evident across Atlantic Canada. Our work with the Ivany Commission on the future of the economy clearly identified attitudinal barriers as one of the most significant challenges facing Nova Scotians. These attitudinal challenges are also present elsewhere in the region.” (The Chronicle Herald May 23 2015, F4, Refashion Rural N.S. economy)

I would venture to guess that the attitude towards change is not just an Atlantic Canadian thing at least not in the Anglican Church.

Amalgamating parishes, studying how many buildings we need and closing many, part time incumbencies, yoked parishes, team ministries, cluster or regional ministries, shared leadership models, deployment of trained lay leaders, re-booting parishes, Fresh Expressions of many kinds. I have heard examples of all of these changes throughout the Ecclesiastical Province. As a bishop, one of the biggest issues I keep running into is: What is the role of clergy today? - To celebrate the sacraments, to be present with people in times of struggle, to preach the Word, yes these remain, but now my expectations are that clergy would be more focussed on forming disciples (through worship and education) and discerning, along with lay leaders, where God is calling the parish to engage with the wider community and how they are going to do this. There is still a need for biblical and theological literacy, but if additional leadership skills are needed, what will disappear, what needs to disappear? There are three theological colleges within the boundaries of the Province, they are situated in each cultural context, are there ways that a conversation can take place with the schools that train clergy and increasingly lay leaders to prepare people for the realities of leadership at this time? At one point the province had a theological commission that seems to have disappeared as members moved.

Does our structure in the Province of Canada support God's Mission at this point in time? Should it simply be a pared down framework to provide for the limited number of administrative functions among these seven dioceses? Without duplicating the work of the dioceses or the general synod can we provide some measure of leadership in mission? If so what? Do we need to change the structure in order to enable leadership in mission?

"Leaderships must encourage the denomination to 'sit at the edge of chaos', not to be so orderly and rule driven that the new cannot emerge, nor to be so full of change that denominational life feels out of control. Leaders must shake things up enough to encourage innovation but without bringing the house down." (Michael Monyagh , *Being Church, Doing Life*, 2014, Monarch Books, p.304)

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