

DIOCESE OF QUÉBEC REPORT FOR PROVINCIAL SYNOD 2015-06-04

1. Describe in detail any initiative in the diocese where there has been a coming together or working together which has build up or is building up the whole body of Christ

Since last synod the Diocese of Quebec has undertaken a major review of the state and needs of its parishes. In the fall of 2013 the bishop sought approval from the Diocesan Executive Committee to establish a working group called the Taskforce for Mission, Ministry, and Management under the chairmanship of Archdeacon Michael Pitts. The mandate of this taskforce was to communicate to congregations a diocesan plan for sustainability and to consult with congregations about their future. The observations of the taskforce in its final report in April 2014 were sobering. For example, out of 71 congregations surveyed, there is an average confirmed membership in each congregation of 32 persons with 15 attending services; only 24% of congregations had specific work with children and youth; and 45% ran a deficit in 2012. Further, only 7% of congregations considered themselves to be growing, 28% believed that they would be continuing, while 64% thought that they would probably be closed or amalgamated with other congregations in the next 5 years. The report analyzed basic beliefs of church members, their understanding of mission, their sense of their church's capacity to sustain itself and grow, and their sense of belonging to the diocese.

The taskforce analysis presented a snapshot of the diocese in 2012-2014 and revealed a grim portrait of the future. It concluded, "If we are to avoid a continued decline, both in finances and in membership in our Diocese, we need to act quickly on urgent and radical change in our ethos and structures" The report went on to recommend practical steps for moving to a new ethos, and avoiding road blocks and traffic cones on the road ahead (resistance to change, inertia, wish to maintain the status quo, and secrecy and defensiveness about money and power).

In summary the report concluded, "The members of the Task Force believe that the present situation in our Diocese is critical. We face a choice. One option is slow, relatively unplanned decline which would leave a small number of congregations still active while large geographical; areas of the Diocese are deprived of ministry...The second option is an orchestrated process of radical change in which there would be a renewal of the mission of the People of God and renewed ways of delivering ministry." In response to the report, and in the hope that some congregations would choose option two, the diocese prepared a programme entitled "Building Sustainable Faith Communities" which the clergy took to their parishes to enable congregations to identify the leadership and other resources they have or would need in order to be sustainable. Pour le secteur francophone du diocese le défi n'est pas semblable que le secteur anglophone. Le défi est de faire connaitre l'Église anglicane parmi les francophones et améliorer la formation des candidats au sacerdoce pour assurer la suivie des ministères existants et la fondation de nouveaux ministères.

Diocesan financing is a challenge which we have been addressing for many years now with significant progress. We have brought order and stability to our financial affairs by balancing the budget of the

Church Society and doubling our shared investments with the parishes. Our stronger financial situation has been guided by the step by step implementation of ethical investment guidelines. Pooled Funds investments of the Church Society (endowments and trusts from parishes, the diocese and the Church society) is now almost \$18 million and growing as we sell off property. The diocese profits from the management fees which this sum generates each year allowing us to be within reach of balanced annual budgets.

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

The bishop engaged a diocesan youth worker in the fall of 2014. He has been working with the leaders of several exciting youth initiatives in the diocese- in the Eastern Townships where two flourishing groups exist, one with teenagers and the other primarily with college students at Bishop's University, and two in the Quebec City region. The worker is also working with the youth at Holy Trinity Cathedral. As a result of this collaboration, 8 youth have been engaged full time for June and July. They are preparing several dramatic pieces which they will perform for tourists visiting the Cathedral Close. The present youth work in the diocese is the most significant in many decades.

The problem facing the diocese is simple: there are virtually no English-speaking people left in central and eastern Quebec and the outflow continues unabated. Our francophone sector is healthy but remains small. The decline in the number of Anglicans greatly diminishes the capacity of our congregations to maintain stipends and buildings. The advanced age of the majority of people in our congregations also means that energy is low and lay leadership is increasingly unavailable.

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 Diocese of Quebec has undertaken a serious reflection over many years about the problems and opportunities caused by declining numbers, churches with limited resources, and remaking nineteenth century church structures into ones which better serves our present context. A number of strategies have already been initiated in various sectors: use and disposal of buildings, canonical revision, mutual ministries, francophone ministry, vocational and non-stipendiary clergy and new ones are being developed (amalgamation of congregations, youth work). Many of these would be relevant to other dioceses and can easily be shared throughout the province.