

**Report of the Task Force for Mission, Ministry and
Management to Diocesan Executive Council
25th-26th April 2014**

Report of the Task Force for Mission, Ministry and Management to DEC 26th April 2014

The Origin and work of the Task Force.

This Task Force was established following discussions and a motion at the meeting of the DEC on 23rd November 2013. The members have been:

Ms Shirley Duncan
The Very Rev Michael J. Pitts (Chairperson)
Mr John Rasmussen
Ms Marie Rübsteck
The Rev Yves Samson
Ms Ruth Sheeran
The Rev Wendy Telfer
The Rev Darla Sloan acted as administrative assistant for part of the work.

The Task Force has met by videoconference on four occasions, 16th February, 2nd March, 14th March, and 6th April. Between meetings members have undertaken various tasks to enable the creation of this report. For a number of reasons we have somewhat deviated from the initial mandate. The chief of these was a shortage of time and resources, but there was also a shift in the financial picture presented at the November DEC meeting. The Chair of our Task Force has been in close contact and dialogue with the Bishop and Executive Archdeacon and some of the changes to the mandate have resulted from those discussions. Other proposed changes have met with their full approval. What is presented in this report is an overview of the current financial and pastoral situation in the congregations of our Diocese together with suggestions for the key areas in which continuing work needs to be undertaken.

An overview of the present finances and ministry in the churches of the diocese

We have undertaken a survey of all the churches in the Diocese which return financial reports to the Synod Office and are listed in the Diocesan Handbook. We have done this in two ways: the gathering of key financial information from the 2012 reports and from a telephone interview with each of those giving pastoral leadership. In total, this has produced information from 96% of the congregations. We have guaranteed the confidentiality of all individual information but have explained that we intend to present a diocesan overview in this report. There may be some statistical anomalies, but we feel that the following information is sufficiently accurate to provide the basis for our recommendations for subsequent work.

Financial overview (see Appendix 1)

To reconcile the financial information of 2012 with the pastoral survey of March 2014, we have based this analysis on 71 individual congregations. Of these, 31% had an annual assessable income of less than \$5,000 and 37% had between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Therefore, 68% of our congregations had an annual income below \$20,000. At the other end of the scale only three congregations had over \$100,000 (Kawawachikamach is omitted from this report, because of its very different and independent funding). Five had between \$50,000 and \$100,000. The remaining 20% had between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

Pastoral Overview (see Appendix 2)

We have four full-time and three part-time stipendiary priests serving twenty-seven congregations; however, the number of congregations served is unevenly distributed amongst the clergy. Thirteen non-stipendiary priests serve twenty-eight congregations while three lay incumbents and one layreader serve in six congregations. Age did not form part of our interviews, but we know from anecdotal evidence a substantial number of the non-

stipendiary priests and lay readers are beyond retirement age. Four summer congregations engage their pastors annually, and we have no further information about these four.

The remaining statistics in Appendix 2 are derived from replies in an interview (or in some cases written replies) and are therefore based on the perceptions of those who give pastoral leadership. Of particular note, 42% of congregations have fewer than 10 regular services a year and 76% have fewer than 25 participants at services. In 31% of the congregations the age range begins at 50 and in 13% at 70. The interview asked about the level of activity in the church other than worship. From the replies a staggering 83% reported minimal or no such activity.

A separate analysis of the diocesan statistics confirmed a reasonable correspondence between the figures derived from the 2014 interviews and the annual returns to the Synod Office in 2012. In addition, this separate analysis revealed that while there was an average of 32 confirmed members per congregation, average attendance at services was 15. However 15% of confirmed members received communion at home or in institutions. Only 24% of congregations have specific work with children and young people. Finally from this separate analysis, we learned that in 2012, 45% of parishes ran at a deficit. The final question in the interview asked the pastoral leaders for their view of their congregations in five years from now (i.e. 2019). These replies showed that only five congregations (7%) would be growing, 20 or 28% would be continuing, while 64% would probably be closed or amalgamated with other congregations

Analysis

The overview presents a snapshot of our diocesan situation in 2012-2014. However, it is well known, from research across Europe and Canada, that the mainline churches have been in decline for at least half a century. This is part of a process to which sociologists and historians give the name “secularisation,” a long-term process with roots going back several centuries. It is not, therefore to be confused with a very small part of the process which we can call “secularity” (much in debate in Québec at the time of the preparation of this report.)

But as well as these general problems, the Anglican Church in Québec has particular problems. In the past it has drawn its members from those who embraced not only English language, but also English culture. In our Diocese this is now only a very small part of the overall demographic picture; it is also a declining part. Many English-speaking younger people have moved away from Québec, which has exacerbated the overall aging trend in our traditional communities. Moreover, many families have depended on the school system to pass along the Christian faith and Anglican tradition to their children. We do not believe that this was ever done well in the schools, and it has now been abandoned. We therefore have a younger generation which has become alienated from faith and church.

When we extrapolate from these figures and perceptions, we see a grim portrait of our future in this Diocese. If we are to avoid a continued decline, both in our finances and in the membership of our Diocese, we need to act quickly on urgent and radical change in our ethos and structures. While bearing in mind the Bishop’s report to DEC in November and the decisions made at that meeting which resulted in our initial mandate, we have discussed at length the problematic situation of the Diocese and offer the following suggestions as a road plan to the future.

A Road Plan 1: Key Changes in Ethos

A Diocesan rather than Congregational Church

We can no longer continue to see ourselves as seventy or so individual units. Many of the churches have insufficient financial ability to sustain more than a bare minimum of ministry and mission and lack the critical

mass of members to change their situation. We need to return to an ethos which reflects the traditional self-understanding of Anglicanism.

“The people of the Diocese of Quebec are members of the Diocesan Church; as such they are grouped into Parishes for the administration of the sacraments and for fellowship and mission, but they remain one Body.”

This statement from our Constitution reflects the earliest teachings about the Church as an organic whole whose life and mission is centred in the role of the Bishop. However, our practice is not faithful to this vision, and the Bishop often appoints clergy to parishes where neither the clergy nor congregations having any clear sense of accountability or commitment to the diocesan mission. We can no longer afford to have clergy, lay leaders and congregations working in isolation from the Bishop and from one another.

Ministry as an outflow of Baptism

For at least two generations theologians have been telling us that ministry is based on baptism and that all members of the Church are called to mission and ministry. The celebration of the Eucharist is reserved to those who have been ordained priest and the act of preaching to clergy or commissioned lay readers. However, lay people with appropriate preparation, training and authorisation can undertake much of the ministry. For example:

- Leading worship;
- Building up the community of the baptized as the Body of Christ through study, prayer and pastoral care;
- Distributing the sacrament of bread and wine, consecrated at another time or in another place, where priestly ministry is not available on a regular basis;
- Teaching and nurturing members of the congregation including those preparing for baptism, confirmation and marriage;
- Visiting congregational members in their homes, including the sick and shut-ins;
- Presiding over rites of funerals, burials and memorials;
- Taking on the tasks required for the administration of the local church community and diocese;
- Working in dialogue and partnership with individuals, groups and institutions in the wider world, who share our vision of peace, justice and respect for the environment;
- Co-ordinating the work of those involved in different levels and kinds of ministry to ensure that the local community remains united in itself and with the whole diocesan effort.

Mission as the prime raison d'être of the Church

Part of a new vision is to let go of a church which exists for itself and spends time and effort only on maintaining its physical and administrative structures. We need to become a church which reaches outward in mission and sees itself as existing for others. To this end, the worldwide Anglican Church has issued a set of guidelines called the Marks of Mission which define how to be a church engaged in mission.

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom;
- To teach, baptize, 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;
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Although these Marks can be nuanced and interpreted in many different ways, we believe that they should be incorporated into our vision of the future for our Diocese.

Discovering from the scriptures and from the tradition new ways of believing and being the Church

Contrary to what some Christians believe, there has never been only one way of understanding the scriptures and the traditions of the message and life of the Church. But in many of our communities neither the Bible nor the message and life of the Church have any meaning or interest to the great majority born after the Second World War, even among those who have remained as churchgoers. We believe that there is a task to be done, not merely by the clergy and theologians, but by all members of the Church. We need to study the scriptures and traditions and, with the younger generations, find ways of embodying the Church which can cross generational boundaries. There will be no one formula. For some it may be livelier worship and a more evangelical approach to the faith. For others it may be a return to solemnity and beauty of traditional worship. For yet others it may be a call to social activism for world justice or a radical understanding of the faith relating to the discoveries of modern knowledge.

Ministère en français et bilingue

En prenant le temps de regarder autour de nous, il est évident que 60% des gens qui nous entourent sont francophones. Dès lors, il est urgent d'augmenter notre capacité à transmettre et à communiquer la foi chrétienne, tout comme de mettre en valeur les trésors que contient la tradition anglicane, non seulement en terme de langage mais aussi dans le contexte du milieu et de la culture francophone et québécoise.

A Road Plan 2: Practical Steps for Moving to a New Ethos

Time is not on our side, and the task of bringing about these changes in ethos is enormous but vitally urgent. We believe that the following steps can and should be started immediately.

Developing a new partnership between the Bishop, the clergy, lay ministers and church members.

While the development of lay ministry in the mid-term future will lead to a new role for the clergy, in the immediate future it will be the clergy, especially the stipendiary clergy, to whom we look for leadership in this process of change. In our episcopal tradition, the Bishop is the chief liturgist and chief pastor of the Diocese. Our Bishop needs to find ways of inspiring the clergy to see themselves primarily as his associates and to challenge them, where needed, to buy into the ethos we have described. Moreover, in the case of both clergy and lay ministry there needs to be clearly set out standards of competence, expectations and a process of performance review at the appropriate level.

Communication and Education

The communication of this road plan to the members of our Diocese and the eliciting of support will not be an easy process. We believe it will involve far more than the task originally envisaged in our mandate. In many congregations the general level of awareness of the riches of the Christian faith and of the Anglican tradition is not high. This process should include:

- The planning of an education and reflection process for the clergy, beginning with the next clergy conference.
- The planning of multiple educational opportunities for leaders and all lay members to renew their understanding of the message and purpose of the Church in Quebec in the 21st century.
- The provision of discernment, preparation and training of lay people to be involved in specific ministries of the Church. Alongside this there needs to be a process of authorisation for specific tasks, which, for some ministries, must include thorough background checks.

While some of this educational process could be undertaken through electronic means the technological possibilities are limited. A two-way conversation cannot be set up with more than six or so people. A webinar format can reach many but is a one-way process which is not necessarily suitable for our purposes. The Lower North Shore and parts of the Gaspé do not have some of these services available. Moreover, if any churches or individuals have internet access of sufficient bandwidth to make use of these means, we have found that the learning curve for those at the receiving end is often very steep. Nevertheless, we believe it is still worth experimenting with electronic communication. We also suggest that producing training videos at the diocesan level would be preferable to using material from outside as it often has little relevance to the specific culture of Québec. For the longer term the Education for Mission programme and the reading and tutorial course of the Montreal Diocesan Theological College also have much value.

L'importance des ministères en français (voir aussi appendice 3 - appendix 3)

Les engagements du Doyenné du Saint-Laurent dans les divers comités diocésains, notre participation au DEC, au conseil consultatif de l'évêque (archidiacones) est une façon de faire Église, qui grandit. Et si la relève est là, ces engagements grandiront. Nos engagements sur les diverses instances décisionnelles de l'Église (synode provincial et national), sont aussi une contribution à la vie de l'Église qui lui apportent un éclairage culturel qui a son poids.

La création du Doyenné permet aussi à ceux et celles qui veulent s'engager dans le ministère, de trouver d'autres personnes qui non seulement parlent leur langue, mais aussi leur histoire et leur culture, d'échanger, de se rencontrer, de faire des projets. Ils ne s'engagent pas seuls dans un monde étranger, ils ont une possibilité de partager leurs rêves et leurs préoccupations.

Enfin, comme pasteurs francophones, nous devons reconnaître, que parce que notre ministère est "hors-frontières" ou si l'on veut ne se limite pas à la communauté des membres de nos églises, plus de 95% de notre temps est consacré au ministère pastoral (rencontre avec les gens dans des moments difficiles ou agréables de leur vie, dans la maladie, dans le deuil, etc) et se fait en langue française; il n'y a souvent que le culte du dimanche qui est bilingue, quand il n'est pas uniquement en français tout dépendant de la composition de l'assemblée.

Providing an evaluation grid for churches and congregations

We have discerned three types of congregation.

- 1) Those which are the likeliest congregations and ministries on which to base a move to the future pattern. Although we are emphasising the diocesan nature of the church, the geography and demography of our Diocese dictates the need for regional centres. We initially suggest the following pattern: St Laurent – 1 centre; St Francis – 3 centres; Quebec City – 2 centres (including the Cathedral); Gaspé – 1 or 2 centres. Each of these centres would be staffed by a stipendiary priest, preferably on a full-time basis. In addition, we believe the interface with Bishop's University is important to provide contact with the students but also to set up dialogue between the Church and Christian faith with the disciplines of the University. The North Shore and especially the Lower North Shore represent a special challenge. There is no obvious centre, but there will still be a need of some kind of clergy ministry for the foreseeable future.
- 2) Congregations with future, if limited, possibilities which will need a great deal of support to develop their future potential.

- 3) Congregations with little or no future which need help and support to decide the next steps as soon as possible while options are still open for them (including partnering with other local Anglican churches or churches of other denominations).

We suggest that, as far as possible, the process of evaluating churches and acting on the evaluations should be undertaken by the members themselves. A good start on this has been made in the St Francis Deanery, and the material they have produced may be of use for others. However, the task is urgent, and there will be a need to develop means of encouragement (and in some cases persuasion or even coercion) to bring about the changes necessary to enable new life in the Diocese. As in the case of individual ministers, there needs to be goals and standards by which to measure the progress and success of church communities.

Structural changes

We anticipate that with good will and cooperation at every level most of these changes can be accomplished without alterations in our governance structure, which would require the long process of modifying the Canons and/or the expensive process of revising the Acts Victoria through provincial legislation.

We submit, however, that the maintenance of nearly eighty discreet units (many of which show very small income and low participation numbers) with separate corporations, financial structures and reports to the Synod Office belongs to a previous age. It causes considerable strain on the clergy and lay readers, especially those who minister in as many as ten separate congregations. It also creates a great deal of administrative work in the Synod Office. In many places it is difficult to find those willing to assume the essential tasks of Warden and Treasurer. Moreover, often the accounting skills are sufficient only to use a cash accounting method and often statements of financial position are not produced.

The Canonical revisions of the Synod of 2012, while still needing ratification at the next Synod, provide ways in which the governance structures of congregations can be amalgamated, even while buildings remain open and worship continues in them. These revised Canons, however, provide the means of accomplishing this but do not give either the Bishop or Synod the power to impose it. Again, means of encouragement and persuasion need to be developed. But equally, there needs to be a structural way in which churches which amalgamate their governance structures can still influence the ways in which funds are used and the life of the community is fostered.

Financing the future

Clearly the processes we are proposing will have associated costs. Three sources for this financing are suggested:

- 1) In recent years the Diocese has been building up the financial resources in the pooled funds and, with strict conditions observed, some of the income and /or capital of those funds might be used. Authority for the use of these funds lies in different areas, often relating to the origin of the donation. This authority structure needs to be clarified and again means of encouragement need to be developed.
- 2) A number of congregations have already decided to close their buildings, with or without the termination of the congregation and its corporation. Some real estate is already on the market and hopefully will increase the funds available. In other places discussions have begun relating to the possible disposal of church buildings and other real estate such as unused rectories and land. These discussions need to be encouraged.
- 3) The level of financial support for ministry, mission and parish operations is very low in nearly all parishes. We believe part of the education and communication process needs to insist that the costs of being a church have to be met, not as an act of charity or by fundraising from others, but through the

churchgoing members contributing sufficient to pay for what is required for the life of the Christian community.

Road Blocks and Traffic Cones on the Road Ahead

We were asked in our mandate to identify potential road-blocks in bringing about change in the Diocese. As we did not proceed to the dissemination of information and the soliciting of co-cooperation, we have not identified any specific problems. However we list a number of general problems which operate in most church structures as well as in the structures of many other institutions and groups:

- 1) Resistance to change – People profoundly affected by changes in all other areas of their lives enjoy belonging to an unchanging church.
- 2) Inertia – The lack of energy, leadership and motivation to bring about change even when it is understood to be needed.
- 3) Homeostasis – The tendency of all organisms and organisations to return to the status quo even when some change has happened or been achieved.
- 4) Secrecy and defensiveness - Especially about money and often linked with the preservation of power.

From anecdotal evidence we are also aware of a widespread ethos of congregationalism which is common in our Diocese and beyond. This is an ethos which sees the local congregation as the locus of the mission and ministry of the church and indeed of its identity. “The Diocese” is seen as a barely necessary superstructure and often viewed with suspicion, if not hostility.

Summary

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 and the specific mission of the Anglican Church. 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. We propose that the following areas are those on which the whole Diocese (administrators, leaders and congregational members) should concentrate their efforts in the coming months:

- 1) Communication of the present situation and the provision of educational resources and activities to facilitate a renewed understanding of the Church and its message.
- 2) The enabling of lay ministry.
- 3) The identification and development of lay and clerical leadership to bring about the needed change.
- 4) The establishment of a budget together with a review of the human and financial resources necessary to pursue this process.
- 5) Support for and extension of ministry and mission in French language and within French culture.