



## **Bishop Michael's Response to the Diocesan Visitations**

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 the Executive Committee of our Diocese met for a Strategic Planning Day. Out of that time together came a Draft Strategic Plan which was taken to the Parishes and Missions of the Diocese in the Fall Consultations. I thank God for all the work and the wonderful and detailed feedback that I have received through the teams that visited in our communities.

Several congregations were not included in the consultation due to weather and scheduling and I apologize on behalf of the Executive Committee for these omissions. We need to continue to listen to one another, our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the Diocese.

Hundreds of hours were given and thousands of kilometres driven in these Consultations and I want to thank everyone who gave up a free evening, drove in the dark and cold arriving home after midnight, came out and participated, and showed hospitality, for the time and talents that you shared in this process.

In a few of the visits some deep anger and hurt surfaced and some have felt that their voices have not been heard or respected. In a few cases that anger and hurt led to words and tones which are not respectful and not appropriate for Christians and Christian fellowship. Where there is anger and hurt, there must be prayer, apology and forgiveness.

One phrase out of the more than fifty pages of reports that I received stood out. It described us this way, “taxed to the max, too few trying to maintain an aging structure.” Many of us feel tired and overburdened and this process is a welcome opportunity to refocus ourselves on what is essential to our life together as Christians and to what will feed and support and energize us.

I have divided my response into three categories, **Discipleship**, **Leadership**, and **Mission**. These three themes can help us to think about why we gather and how we are sent out. Many Dioceses and Parishes define themselves as “Disciples making Disciples” and that is a useful definition of who we are and what we do. But uncommitted disciples cannot make committed disciples. We need to be renewed in our own discipleship, our commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and then as we discover our particular ministry we can be trained to go out into the world commissioned by Christ.

## **DISCIPLESHIP**

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2.42

The definition of Membership came up in several of our meetings and this issue is before Anglicans all around the world. We are members of Christ, by the grace communicated to us in Baptism which we receive by faith. The challenge before us is to teach and explain to ourselves and others what that membership means, its benefits and responsibilities. The hard fact is that most of our members are lapsed; they are not living out their membership in the body of Christ in terms of the very four elements identified in Acts 2.42.

Throughout the Diocese there is a call for teaching on Membership and I expect that a focus on Acts 2.42 will give shape to that. I was excited to read in one report that the Visitor encountered a “thirst for knowledge, instruction and fellowship.” These are precisely the very core purposes of our congregations.

In particular we have heard calls for three things in our Congregations

- Bible Study (that is relevant and accessible)
- Teaching on Stewardship, Tithing and Proportional Giving
- More and Deeper Fellowship

Our fellowship within the Diocese was also a large issue that you identified. Many of these concerns centred around the proposal for Indigenous Self-Determination. Several congregations expressed a desire to better connect with surrounding aboriginal communities and reserves and many people spoke about their fear of separation. All across the Diocese there is a real desire to ‘walk together’. As these consultations were taking place a Working Group of the Indigenous Council was preparing a proposal, - Mamuwe Isi Miywachimowin (Together in the Gospel) - which it offered to the January meeting of the Indigenous Council “as one step towards walking together as equals within the Diocese and the Church and a way of beginning to address the issues around non-stipendiary ministry.” That proposal will be presented to the Executive Committee on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011. It includes the call for a Diocesan Indigenous Bishop who would serve alongside me and be elected by a General Assembly using traditional means. I wholeheartedly support this proposal as a way of us walking together. Other models have been considered, especially at the January Council meeting, but any suggestion of separation was soundly rejected by both the Indigenous Council and the new Council of Elders at that meeting.

In our Diocesan fellowship the need and desire for better Communication was raised on numerous occasions. We heard

- Calls for Greater Transparency about Diocesan Finances and Apportionment
- What happens to Apportionment?
- What does the Executive Committee do?
- How can congregations work together and share resources?

One surprising issue that surfaced in more than one community was the scandal of Lay Readers that do not regularly attend Church on Sunday. This is a helpful reminder that we must put discipleship before leadership and that only those who are committed disciples are fit for consideration and training as leaders.

We need a renewal, a deep renewal, in the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, that we might be recommitted as disciples of Jesus Christ. At Pentecost, those who heard Peter preach about Jesus who died and rose again and repented of their sins and believed the Good News were baptized, received the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit and then they committed themselves to teaching, fellowship, communion and prayer. So this Pentecost we will seek as a Diocese to be renewed in our commitment, to be convicted of our sins and confirmed in our faith so that with the fresh anointing of God's Spirit we might recommit ourselves to following Jesus Christ.

## **LEADERSHIP**

"That the leaders took the lead in Israel, that the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!" Judges 5.2

In the initial meeting of the Executive Committee last April and throughout all the consultations the call for Training for the Laity was one of the loudest and clearest themes. The training of Lay Leaders and Lay Readers in and for our congregations must be one of our top priorities as a Diocese over the next several years. In particular our Lay Readers need and deserve greater support, education and resources.

Other suggestions and requests around leadership included,

- Leadership Conferences
- Ongoing training of Lay Readers and Clergy
- Resources for Lay Readers in Sunday Preparation
- Training in Pastoral Visitation and Listening
- Teaching resources for Sunday School and for Youth

In several of our congregations and missions there is not an active working Vestry. This leaves the Priest feeling unsupported and the people feeling powerless to make decisions

or changes. We need to set up a simple process to train and support new Vestries in those communities that do not have one.

The discernment of Vocations to the ordained ministry was raised in several places and general teaching on Vocation, Ministry and Ordination is needed.

## **MISSION**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28.19-20

There was a lot of positive feedback on Back to Church Sunday which many reported as successful and enjoyable. In one consultation someone described the church most beautifully as “a place where people could (*should*) feel included and forgiven.” Is that your experience of your congregation? Is that the experience of outsiders and newcomers? In many congregations the extraordinary amount of violence and suicide in our communities was highlighted as an important part of the world in which we serve and into which we are sent by Jesus.

There were several helpful suggestions and questions about how we do mission.

- Radio Ministry, Using Radio (MBC and local stations)
- Broadcasting Sermons on the Internet
- Possible Church hosting Saturday Coffee Row
- House Church Resources and Support
- Home Sunday School Resources and Support
- Can Parishes within a Deanery share a priest?
- We need strategies for gathering for teaching and fellowship, without a priest, without a church, and outside of Sunday

## Next Steps

- Approval of Mamuwe Isi Miywachimowin by the Executive Committees of the Diocese of Saskatchewan and the Province of Rupert's Land.
- Pentecost 2011. Recommitment in every Church by every member to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2.42).
- Back to Church Sunday. Diocesan Event with Michael Harvey, Friday June 3<sup>rd</sup>, Prince Albert (*with further training on the Saturday*). Back to Church Sunday – September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- Bible Study Resources and Training for Lay Leaders
- Lay Readers Training (Two events per year)

### Communication

- Greater concentration and effort on the monthly FYI and the Website
- Better use of the Saskatchewan Anglican
- Diocesan Finances and Apportionment (Finance Committee)
- Executive Committee Communication of Role and Decisions (Executive Committee)
- Expanded and improved Diocesan Cycle of Prayer

### Technology

- Sunday Sermons on the website
- Support and possible hosting for Parish/Mission websites
- Video Sermons on Website
- Use of Skype and other internet technology for meetings and training

### Other

- Vestry Training Event
- Support of renewal in Music of all kinds in our congregations, resources and training
- Stewardship Education, Materials and Programme

- Great Chapter Meetings with the Bishop on sharing ministry and resources
- Cree Language Course on Syllabics, Support and Resources for teaching the Lord's Prayer and Cree Hymnody to our children and in our Schools
- Pulpit Switches and Visits
- Development of local relationships with the ELCIC our Full Communion Partners.
- Maintaining and developing shared ministry, worship and mission with our Lutheran brothers and sisters, especially in Kinistino, Spritiwood, Leoville, and Meadow Lake and coordinating efforts in the North with LAMP.
- 2011 visit of Bishop Michael Smith from the Diocese of North Dakota.
- Synod 2011
- Vital Church Planting West (Edmonton, May 26-28, 2011 <http://vitalchurchplanting.com/index.html>)
- Working with CiRCLe M, Centre for Rural Community Leadership and Ministry, to support our rural congregations and clergy.
- Leadership Training Event(s) 2012

## **COSTS**

It costs to meet. It costs time and money, two resources that we value very highly and our meeting together is a bold sign that we value our fellowship in Christ. We need to meet and to meet in ways that honour Jesus Christ in our midst and encourage and build up each other. The word 'meeting' can turn many people off and makes us think of wasting time in stuffy rooms filled with boring and irrelevant discussions and arguments. We need to transform every meeting so that they become transforming experiences of Christian fellowship. The other major cost for any of the plans above is the necessary lay and clerical leadership to organize, promote, host, pray for and support events and programmes. With the commitment of time, money and people, we will be able to follow through on these initiatives.

Mamuwe Isi Miywachimowin: This includes a budget at the end of the proposal. This budget was part of the 2011 budget adopted by the Executive Committee and the five year forecast that they reviewed. The proposal involves raising \$20,000 in the first year from Indigenous

congregations. In January of 2011 one day of James Settee College was devoted to Stewardship and this was raised at the subsequent Indigenous Council. Walking together as equals means that indigenous members of the Diocese will take equal authority and responsibility within the Church and that includes in matters of finances and stewardship.

I have estimated the cost of some of the initiatives in the plan as follows.

\$10,000	Back to Church Sunday 2011
\$5,000	Bible Study
\$5,000	Lay Readers training twice a year
\$2,500	FYI and Website
\$1,000	Diocesan Cycle of Prayer
\$1,000	Sunday Sermons on the Web
\$1,000	Web Hosting and Assistance
\$1,000	Video Sermons
\$5,000	Vestry Training
\$10,000	Music 2011-2012
\$2,000	Stewardship Education
\$5,000	Cree Resources and Training
\$5,000	CiRCLe M training and support
\$10,000	Leadership Training 2012
<b>\$63,500</b>	<b>Total</b>

I will be asking the Executive Committee at our March 2011 meeting to commit funds from our Reserves for these plans.

We need to spend a significant amount of time, money and energy in the next couple of years to our focus on discipleship, leadership and mission. If we are to follow through on the Plan that we have shared in shaping, much will be required from me and all of you. The first step forward is to make sure that we are walking with the Lord. The first step is a renewal in our faith and commitment to Jesus Christ and that is only possible by the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. I invite you then to join me and all your sisters and brothers in the Diocese on Pentecost, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011, as we seek a renewal in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and recommit ourselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers. Then and only may it be said of us in our day, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Amen. So be it.

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