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Diocesan Council Mission Outreach Team
Report to Diocesan Council and Diocesan Synod
Re: Church Planting

Background

The 2009 Synod of the Diocese of Fredericton passed motion 120-23 as follows:

That Synod take note of the resources and possibilities available in church planting as a means of evangelism and church growth, and direct Diocesan Council to explore opportunities for church planting in this diocese subject to available funding.

In light of this motion, the Diocesan Mission & Outreach Committee has been at work researching and discussing this topic for more than a year. Our extensive conversations resulted in this report which has been revised several times. Beyond research, prayer and discussion, three of our members (The Rev. Paul Ranson, The Very Rev. Keith Joyce, and The Ven. Vicars Hodge) attended the June 2011 "Vital Church Planting Conference" in Toronto.¹ The conference was attended by people from coast to coast who are involved in church planting as well as international leaders. The keynote speaker was Bishop Stephen Croft of Sheffield (previously Archbishops' Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions.) From our discussions, and from Bishop Croft's teaching about Fresh Expressions^{2,3}, we feel we are gaining a grip on this very large topic. The following are some of the principles and our growing convictions regarding church planting.

There needs to be a fundamental shift in our understanding of Church. This shift must

¹ Helpful links and information on this website. <http://www.vitalchurchplanting.com/>

² A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church for its cultural context.

³ A 5 minute video of Bishop Croft answering the question "What is a Fresh Expression"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh92Ott_EQg&feature=player_embedded

reclaim the notion that the Church is sent by God into the world. As God the Father sent the Son, the Father and Son send the Church out into the world in the power of the Spirit. As, Bishop Croft said, "It is not that the Church of God has a mission in the world, but rather, that the God of mission has a church in the world." Our principle task as the sent Church then is to present the Gospel to God's world in ways it can be perceived and received. The Gospel does not change -- but most certainly the appropriate ways of communicating and transmitting the Good News varies from culture to culture and from time to time. The challenge for the church today is to discover ways to present the Gospel to a post-Christian context. Archbishop Fred Hiltz spoke to this truth in a recent letter.⁴ He said, "The Anglican Church of Canada needs to become a mission-shaped Church that speaks with greater relevance to an increasingly secularized country." This means re-imagining ways of being Church in order to live out the same Gospel.

It is not hard to see the great societal changes we have experienced in the past several decades. In the 1950's, most people in Canada knew the Gospel story and to be a Christian was largely synonymous with being Canadian. Church attendance was an expected practice for a good citizen. Here in Canada the culture reinforced the Church -- schools taught children the Lord's Prayer and the 23rd Psalm and the church thrived on a sense of Christian duty felt by the general population.

Today we are in a post-Christian context. In some ways our culture is very similar to the multi-faith context in which the New Testament was written. Christians are once again one faith group among many and the culture does not encourage or promote our faith. However, there is one key difference: rather than being unknown, the Church, (or what people believe the Church to be) has been largely dismissed. The temptation in this climate is for Christians to cling to what is familiar and to become insular in the practice of our faith.

However, this shift in perspective toward the church and its Gospel message is an opportunity to express in fresh ways the values of the Kingdom of God (Justice, Beauty, Community and True Spirituality). So, whilst being in a minority situation can make us want to turn inward and preserve the core - the gospel is calling the church to reengage the culture in fresh and new ways. The Church in our time must engage the wider community and be actively living these values. Through living out the Gospel we can reach and engage un-churched people with the Good News of Jesus Christ. A focus on "Kingdom work" more than "Church work" can expose people to the heart of Jesus, even if they would never

⁴ <http://freshexpressions.ca/2011/01/anglican-church-of-canada-needs-to-become-a-mission-shaped-church-says-primate/>

consider entering a traditional church on Sunday morning. It is about the Church, going to the world in love and service -- instead of expecting people to come to us. This is not a new idea but a fresh appropriation of it. Bishop John Medley wrote in 1871: 'If the Church is to make progress and to show such signs of life as to make it worthwhile for any person to join her, she must meet the want of the present generation.'

In order to plant a church in the 1950's all that was needed was to pick a neighbourhood where houses were being constructed and put up a new building. The philosophy was simple: "Build it and they will come" to borrow a line from Hollywood. The sense of obligation that was part of Christendom was enough to draw a congregation to the new church. Today, in a post-Christendom time this old method simply is no longer effective. The learning of the past few years is that the process for church planting in our time is very different.

The learning of the Fresh Expressions movement (initially a joint initiative of the Church of England and the Methodist Church) is that church planting begins with prayer and discussion to discover the needs of a community or network.⁵ There is also a lot of time and effort in prayer given to listening for the heart of Jesus in that particular context. From prayer and discernment usually comes some form of ministry or service to the network or community. Prayer and discernment leading to a Kingdom work of loving service are the essential first steps. Long before a building is considered or a worship service is planned -- Christians are praying and serving a community and thus revealing Christ's love. Through the ministry of service, Gospel values are communicated and around this ministry of service a community begins to form. This community, as it lives for Christ, becomes a place of proclamation and service -- and a place where disciples are being formed. Then this becomes a church - though it may look very different from what we would currently identify as church. Some of these Fresh Expressions might evolve into communities that become parish churches -- but most will not. Rather they will be authentic expressions of Church that do not have the traditional shape or structure.

This is not to say that more traditional approaches to church are no longer relevant embodiments of the Gospel. On the contrary, traditional churches continue to attract people when the services are worshipful, the community is welcoming and the preaching is

⁵ A network is a group of individuals that are brought together through a common interest, like music, sports, or even work. Networks are replacing neighbourhoods for the kind of community they provide. Today people are more often brought together through their interests than their place of residence.

meaningful. According to sociologist Reginald Bibby, churches can flourish just by doing what they do well. A survey taken in 2005 shows that Canadian society can be divided into three categories: Insiders, Marginals and Outsiders. Insiders are 34% of the population. These individuals are regular participants in church organizations and worship services. Marginals make up 41% of the population and they are people who are somewhat involved and are open to further involvement. Outsiders make up the remaining 25% of the population. These people are content with not being involved with any church organization. This research suggests that 75% of the population is open to remaining or becoming involved with the church. What are required are relevant sermons, powerful liturgy, and a gospel presence in the community. Such churches also need to be invitational in nature, and intentionally seeker friendly.

So we live in a time when two forms of Church must co-exist. There is much life left in traditional forms of church -- the "attractional model." But most new growth for the Gospel, at least in the West, will likely come from planting new churches following a "missional model" as described above. We believe that God's church in our Diocese requires a "*mixed economy/ecology*" approach to church. Bishop Graham Cray explains it this way: "Mixed economy is an expression that originates from Archbishop Rowan Williams when he was a Bishop in Wales. The thinking behind it is that new congregations and church plants are not to replace existing churches with their approach, but complement them." For a fuller discussion of what is meant by 'mixed economy' please follow this link to an article by Bishop Graham Cray (Archbishop's Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions).⁶ In a mixed economy/ecology approach to church, we need to pursue the two methods of growing the gospel community: we are to do what we have been doing for two millennia -- as well as we are able. At the same time we need to be seeking new ways to engage the world for Christ. We need attractional and missional models both working at the same time. Some will be drawn to the existing parish churches -- and others will be reached by Christ through new and innovative ways of taking the Gospel to the community.

We must recognize from the outset that church planting is always a 'risky enterprise.' We need to recognize that it is about trying new and creative ways of being church -- some of these will succeed and others will not. Even the mistakes are learning experiences. We need to give ourselves permission to risk and to fail. Follow this link to listen to Bishop George Bruce (Diocese of Ontario) discuss Fresh Expressions of Church in a rural context --

⁶ <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/news/grahamcray/christiantoday-may11>

and also the need to take risks for the gospel.⁷

One question that must be engaged as we explore traditional and Fresh Expressions is simply: "What is a church?" Due to our own personal histories and experience we tend to think that "Church" needs to look like what we grew up with. As we move into attempting some Fresh Expressions in our Diocese this question will be asked and answered again and again. Many Fresh Expressions of Church will not look at all like traditional church communities -- and this can cause confusion. According to Bishop Stephen Croft we need to think carefully about what it means to be Church in order to accommodate Fresh Expressions of Church. Bishop Croft urges a fresh look at the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral⁸ -- a four-point articulation of the Anglican Church's understanding of what is essential in discerning the presence of "Church". While written for a very different time (colonial expansion and Church Growth, and threats to unity) the Quadrilateral sets out an Anglican understanding of the boundaries that mark "church":

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
3. The two Sacraments, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,--ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

For examples of Fresh Expressions of Church in the Anglican Tradition we would refer to "Mission Shaped Church 2004," a report written by a group headed by Bishop Graham Cray. It described some of the "fresh expressions of church" which were springing up all over the country, discussed the theology of such things, and gave encouragement to those who wanted to experiment with forms of church that would reach those presently "un-churched."

There are several examples of Fresh Expression in the Anglican Church in Canada. The Diocese of Toronto has gained a lot of experience in this work during the past few years -- in both rural and urban settings. Follow this link for an interesting article about church planting in Toronto.⁹ These would include the "Transplant" model as exemplified by the

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSCDLEjs2mU>

⁸ http://anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html

⁹ <http://ureachtoronto.com/content/anglican-diocese-toronto-church-planting-canada>

Church of the Resurrection (Toronto) planted from Little Trinity Church. There is also the model of "Incubator Church", or a new service plant within an existing Church, where a different style of worship draws a different group of people. In this situation there is no expectation that the new worshippers will ever migrate to the principle service. A good example of this is the "Stepping Stone Café" in Saint John. Other models include Cell churches which focus on small group ministry and discipleship. There is even virtual churches such as the Episcopal Cathedral found in Second Life. Plus, "Messy Church"^{10,11} is an attempt at creating intergenerational opportunities for communicating the gospel. There are several local experiments underway in this Diocese. These all minister to individuals and groups of people that would not typically 'go to church' but rather the Church is 'going to them.'

Although it is helpful to understand some of the models that have been used, there is no one model that fits every situation. Furthermore, choosing to plant a church does not start with selecting a model. Instead, church planting begins with prayerful discernment. Establishing a new body of believers is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit and it needs to be approached prayerfully with the triune God at its centre. Church planting also takes intentional preparation of a lay and clergy team which involves studying the demographics, community needs and historical / political background of an area as well as assessing the resources available. All of these aspects would need to be prayerfully considered well in advance of any action being taken on any church planting initiative.

How do we proceed?

In order for Fresh Expressions to be successful, support is needed at the Diocesan Level.

We believe that the appointment of the Parish Development Officer is a very helpful sign of such support. As a result of our research and discussions we would like to suggest some steps to be taken at the parish level and then at the Diocesan/Archdeaconry level.

Parish Ministry

At the Parish level we believe it is crucial to engage the services of the Parish Development Officer. We believe the work of the PDO will be foundational and very helpful in assisting

¹⁰ Messy Church is one church's attempt to be church for families who might want to meet Jesus, belong to their local church and bring up their children as Christians but can't cope with traditional Sunday morning church services. It is focused on families and involves crafts, and snacks that complement the Gospel.

¹¹ <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/messycowplain>

Parishes to assess themselves and the potential for ministry in their respective areas.

The PDO's ministry we pray will assist parishes to develop something like the Mission Action Plans (MAPs) used in the Diocese of Edmonton. There, Bishop Jane Alexander has requested that every parish create a MAP. The creation of this document occurs through the prayerful discernment of the body of believers within that parish. Each MAP includes a parish profile, a community audit, an envisioning exercise and an analysis of the parish's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The MAP attempts to lay out a step-by-step plan for short, medium and long-term ministry goals. MAPs grow and change as the Holy Spirit guides the parish. Our Diocese's new PDO will be a valuable resource and support to parishes as they consider how to respond in mission to the Gospel challenges in their particular context.

Equipping of Lay-leadership

New church planting initiatives will depend on strong leadership, both Lay and Clergy. Many of the clergy in the Diocese of Fredericton are extremely busy providing pastoral oversight for the established body of believers under their care. Therefore, the training of spiritually mature lay-leaders will be an essential step toward church planting. This training could come in the form of diocesan-wide church planting conferences, archdeaconry-organized training sessions, and/or individual parish training sessions. It is important to note at this point that church planting must still come under both the spiritual and practical authority of the priest of the parish, the archdeacon in the region and the bishop of the diocese. It is also important that there is dialogue at each of these levels concerning issues such as expectations, transparency and accountability. Research shows that some of the most successful church plants are performed by a team of people. Therefore, equipping the laity for this ministry would be an important step in creating an effective church planting team.

Establish a Parish Discernment Team

From a diocesan wide phone survey, the Mission & Outreach team was able to get a strong sense of the mission efforts currently taking place in the Diocese of Fredericton. The team was struck by the diversity of mission efforts presently underway in the diocese at the international, national, diocesan and local levels. However, this survey also revealed that many parishes in the diocese are predominately involved in funding outreach ministries,

without having much relational contact with that ministry. Although there is definitely a place for this type of mission work, church planting is a relational ministry that involves face-to-face contact with people in the community. Therefore, parishes could benefit by organizing a group of individuals that would work toward discerning how their church can make an impact in the wider community. This group's focus would be to prayerfully look at the unmet needs in the community as well as the relational opportunities for sharing the Gospel. Depending on the community, a church plant could grow from this discernment process.

It is important to look for opportunities to join with other parishes for the purpose of planting new churches. While many Church Planting initiatives will be the fruit of prayer and work undertaken by a particular parish, sometimes a work requires wider cooperation. Sometimes a church plant by its nature is best undertaken by several churches, even churches of different denominations. Other times the missional work may involve a vision that extends beyond the means and skill-set of an individual parish. When parishes are willing to work together, church planting initiatives can draw on a larger pool of resources and support. There are exciting examples of this type of shared ministry already at work in the Diocese of Fredericton. In the Church of England, when a Fresh Expression extends beyond a parish boundary or includes several churches or other ecclesial bodies, a Bishop's Mission Order¹² is drafted which sets out leadership, accountability and expectations as the project unfolds.

Training of Clergy & Laity

The 2008 Rural and Struggling Missions report, called the Diocese to focus on training priests and laity for the needs of the current post-Christian context. Church Planting initiatives increase this requirement for training. Our leaders must be equipped and encouraged toward growing Christ-centered and mission-oriented churches; namely, churches that are seeking to share the love of Christ within their community in both traditional and non-traditional means. Our churches need to rediscover a passion for reaching people who have not yet heard the gospel. The Diocese of Fredericton can use clergy training days and lay leadership seminars to educate and encourage parishes to prayerfully seek ways to serve the community and to look for networks within the community that would be open to the Gospel message. We also can utilize resources for

¹² <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/55196/bmocop.doc>

training in Fresh Expressions that have been developed in the UK and adapted for use in Canada such as the Mission Shaped Ministry course.

Identify Current Clergy and Recruit New Clergy who are Passionate about Church Planting

Research indicates that successful Church planting requires strong leaders who are well formed in Holy Scripture. With this in mind, it would be important for the diocese to be intentional in encouraging and recruiting clerical leaders. Resources exist in Canada for assisting clergy to discern if they have a calling and the needed gifts for a ministry of Church planting.¹³ We can access these resources for assessment. Furthermore, the diocese can be proactive in seeking individuals with such a calling and including such individuals in our clergy training processes. An increased focus on church planting at a diocesan level would also mean recruiting passionate clergy to come and join the diocese with this vision in mind. Therefore, our diocese could develop programs to encourage the individuals in our midst who have this calling and actively seek out individuals who are interested in taking these kinds of risks for the Gospel.

Establish Mission Priests & Parishes

After a study of demographics and prayerful discernment we believe there are areas in our Diocese that are ready for church planting work. We dream of a day when we might deploy clergy and lay teams to such areas to establish kingdom work and plant churches. It is possible that such work would require mission priests with stipends subsidized by the diocesan family for that mission work. It may be that a mission priest could be a person who could raise a portion of their salary through 'tent-making' or through the support of other churches and individuals rather than being fully dependent on the parish in which they work.

The research of the Mission & Outreach team has found that the dioceses in this country that are actively church planting have been extremely intentional in their planning and organization. There are steps at the diocesan, archdeaconry and parish levels that are absolutely necessary for a church plant to be supported. Although this report does not contain an exhaustive list of necessary steps, the team sees these other church-planting

¹³ People with such giftings are called "Ordained Pioneer Ministers (OPMs)"

dioceses as an invaluable resource. We strongly encourage our diocese to explore the Dioceses of Edmonton and Toronto to learn from their work in the church planting field. A church plant requires that faithful believers prayerfully seek to create a new community of people who have Good News to share. As Christians, we carry the responsibility of actively sharing the faith with people who have not yet heard or engaged with the Gospel message. Unfortunately, there is a temptation to ignore our responsibility to actively seek ways to share the Faith. Church planting is one response to Christ's command to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). This commission to our church invites all of us to the challenge of communicating the Gospel to a world that is increasingly non-churched.

Relying on Christ as the centre of our ambitions and desires and the Holy Spirit for direction, this Team encourages our diocese to step out in the risky yet necessary and even sacrificial process of church planting in our Diocese.

Recommendations:

The Mission & Outreach Team respectfully submits the following recommendations for the prayerful consideration of Synod:

1. Given the reality in the Anglican Communion that new initiatives and ministries only thrive if they have visible Episcopal encouragement and support, we respectfully ask the Bishop of Fredericton to give his leadership, permission, support, and encouragement to the initiatives proposed, namely:

a. Conducting *Fresh Expressions Visioning Days*¹⁴ in numerous centers around the Diocese during the coming year (such as Fredericton, Saint John, Moncton, and Miramichi) with a view to exposing many people to the ideas of a Mixed Economy Church and Fresh Expressions of ministry.

b. Conducting at least two *Mission Shaped Ministry* courses during the coming year. For the first conference, we would like to invite a trained facilitator such as Nick Brotherwood. The second offering of this course could be led by a local team of trainers. The goal of MSM courses is to train parish teams so that we can launch some Fresh Expressions in this Diocese.

¹⁴ <http://freshexpressions.ca/fxc-training/>

c. That we seek to identify, support, and encourage those called to the vocation of being Ordained Pioneer Ministers.

2. That Diocesan Council continues to learn more about the church planting initiatives taking place elsewhere in Canada.

3. That Synod authorizes the Mission Team to conduct a demographic study of the province to seek to learn more about possible ministry opportunities for the Gospel and receptivity to new church initiatives.

4. That Synod encourages all archdeaconries to continue to seek opportunities for shared ministries that could give rise to new faith communities.

5. That Synod encourage all parishes (in collaboration with the Parish Development Officer) to initiate a parish-wide discernment process to develop parish mission plans.

6. That we establish as a principle in this Diocese an embracing of the notion of *mixed economy church* where fresh expressions of ministry and traditional ministries are both welcome and seen as valid and necessary parts of the ministry of the Body of Christ to the world for which Christ died.

7. That resources and information to encourage and support Fresh Expressions of ministry be made available and accessible on a Mission page of the Diocesan Website. Links and resources to be included:

Fresh Expressions Canada	http://www.freshexpressions.ca/
Fresh Expressions (UK)	http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/home
Mission Shaped Ministry	http://www.missionshapedministry.org/

Respectfully submitted,

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