

## **PRIORITIES AND PLANS, 2011-2013**

Our mission statement calls us “to worship God and proclaim Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to embody – in word and action – God’s reconciling love, justice, compassion and liberation, through which knowledge of God’s reign is extended.” Worship – Proclaim – Embody. Anglicans have been, and are called to live and honour this mission, and to find new ways to bring this mission to life.

Our Plans and Priorities are the ways we will transform these words into action. We continue to embrace a Diocesan vision to build communities of hope and compassion. In practice we have typically thought of those communities as parochial – based in gatherings around a geographically defined area with a church building and its ministry at its centre. Developing and supporting vital parish ministries has been the foundation of our diocesan mission strategy. Recently we have been widening our understanding of both traditional parishes and newer forms of ministry as we respond to God’s invitation to mission for the whole Diocese.

The Our Faith, Our Hope – Re-imagine Church campaign outlines the key parameters of this work:

- strengthen local parishes
- building the church for tomorrow
- revitalising our inheritance
- giving to others beyond ourselves

Strategically, this involves the development of strong, competent leadership; the planting of a new church and supporting innovative ways to live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ; a more cutting edge communications strategy and the use of new technologies to enable us to proclaim the Gospel more effectively.

Practically, we must continue to invest in adapting our buildings so that they can efficiently and effectively serve our ministry and mission. We can no longer ignore the impact our daily activities have on the environment around us and we must be intentional about the footprint we are leaving on God’s creation.

We are committed to continually reconfiguring our structures, both physical and corporate in ways that support parishes in their specific response to God’s commission in their communities. Our intent is to focus our resources to support parishes in every part of our diocese.

These priorities have shaped where and how we intend to focus our resources of energy and finances over the next two years.

No matter how our definition of “parish” is expressed – and it is constantly being redefined – we know that faith is lived out most authentically in a community-centred gathering. Resourcing current leadership appropriately, and identifying and forming new leaders, are critical to grow and animate community spiritual life. In order to equip lay and ordained leadership we need proper training, appropriate remuneration, and the support of experienced mentors, coaches and volunteers. Within our diocesan budget it is clear that this is our largest financial responsibility.

Anglicans are episcopally led and synodical governed, a fundamental feature of our way of being church. It is this structure that provides the framework from which we can act creatively and

innovatively as we seek to express our mission. Our budget reflects our commitment to conform to legislative and corporate requirements and staff ourselves appropriately to perform these governance tasks responsibly. We are a diocesan church with regional diversity. Episcopal area budgets are being increased as part of a commitment to resource parishes, local leadership and local initiative, with funding decisions made at a regional level. As part of a much wider Communion, we fulfil our responsibilities through assessment payments, voluntary tithing, and extensive investment of time and leadership provincially, nationally and internationally with our church and ecumenically.

We used to think that planting a new church meant simply purchasing space, constructing a building, putting in a priest, “and they will come”. We know that in our present context this isn’t the case. In order to respond authentically to those who have never been part of the church or left it, we need to shift our paradigm. This is our missionary field. We need to actively identify clergy and lay people with the dynamic skills to start new churches that do not and may never resemble the church many of us have grown up in. Resourcing these ministries may never include the cost of land and building but does carry different costs – researching, coaching, launching, assessing. And reconfiguring a number of existing parishes requires delicate, intentional work that we support with diocesan staff and a cadre of trained and gifted volunteers. All this enables us to respond to the very exciting task of re-imagining and building the Church of tomorrow.

Many of our new initiatives don’t fit the parochial structure we have. We will need to be flexible yet continue to follow appropriate employment policies and fulfill those corporate requirements around insurance, screening, and training that result in safe and healthy communities where we are confident of best practices.

Communicating the gospel challenges us every day. We no longer simply have to respond to those who say they can’t hear the sermon – but would never consider moving forward from the back of the church! Technology races ahead of us and we scramble to understand. It is important for us if we are committed to reaching out to seekers and newcomers and long-time parishioners alike that we communicate on many levels. We need to educate ourselves, embrace on-line technologies and enhance our capacity to offer access to our message with podcasts, live streams and instant messaging. At the same time our strategic use of print media, particularly our advertisements, has received positive response. We will continue to pay for prominent placement of ads celebrating Christmas, Easter and Earth Day and advocacy for our social justice priorities.

There is no question that our physical plants – both at the Diocesan Centre and in local communities continue to require intentional stewardship. As we look toward new builds and renovations we insist on keeping ecological concerns central when we design, choose materials, and plan for heating and water use. Diocesan staff works closely with parishes in choosing architects and builders that will reflect these values and assist us in practical ways to live out God’s expectation of our stewardship of Creation. Sometimes we need to remember that all physical structures have a life cycle and simply become tired. We need to be courageous in embracing adaptive re-use of some of our places of worship that will provide benefits for the future.

All of us hear God calling us to join in extending the reign of Christ. How we respond in theory and in practice will be informed by our ability as a Diocese to continue to build and equip communities of faith that offer welcome, worship, teaching, pastoral care and social justice. We will then be able to insure that all who come seeking hope and compassion will find a Christian expression that is viable, life-giving, and life-changing.