



Cast the Net

DISCUSSION GUIDE



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada



Beloved in Christ,

Jesus said to them: "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." – John 21:10

Since September of 2022, the Diocese of Toronto has been intentionally engaging with chapter 21 of the gospel according to John. The Diocese incorporated the study of this passage of scripture into every consultation, every meeting, every conversation. Time and again, we returned to the story of the disciples doing an old thing in a new way, as directed by the prompting of Jesus, even when they didn't fully understand – or maybe even agree with! – what they were being asked to do.

The full report of our Cast the Net listening and visioning process is now complete, and the 20 Calls to the Diocese are the result of hours of thoughtful, prayerful discernment. We believe that the Holy Spirit has led us to this point, and we are excited for the next step in our journey.

These 20 Calls are both aspirational and challenging. They reflect who we believe we are being called to be by the Holy Spirit.

And these 20 Calls are for all of us – every Anglican in the Diocese of Toronto. Not just the staff at the Synod Office, not just the clergy or bishops, not just the churchwardens or lay leaders. Every single one of us, individually and collectively as parishes, committees and small groups, need to pray into – and own – these 20 Calls.

Let each of us be honest with ourselves and ask: which Calls resonate with me most deeply, either because I am already engaged with the work, or because I feel the Holy Spirit prompting me to start something new?

I commend to you this discussion guide, which will assist you in your reflections on the Cast the Net Report and help you to focus your prioritization of the 20 Calls.

May the harvest of our nets be abundant, to the Glory of God.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil
Bishop of Toronto



INTRODUCTION

Followers of Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, serve the world God loves!

The Cast the Net vision is the result of an extensive consultation and listening process that engaged a broad and diverse cross-section of people, including more than 250 clergy and 500 lay people, 15 focus groups and members of Synod and Synod Council. A vision with four themes and 20 Calls to the Diocese were the result of the wealth of ideas, hopes and insights that were heard. You are encouraged to read the Cast the Net Report (www.toronto.anglican.ca/castthenet) in preparation for this discussion, to get a sense of the comments and responses that inform this vision.

Cast the Net was adopted unanimously at Synod 2023. Now comes the important work of implementing the vision. It's time for all parts of the Diocese of Toronto to take up the Calls and let them shape us and our ministries.

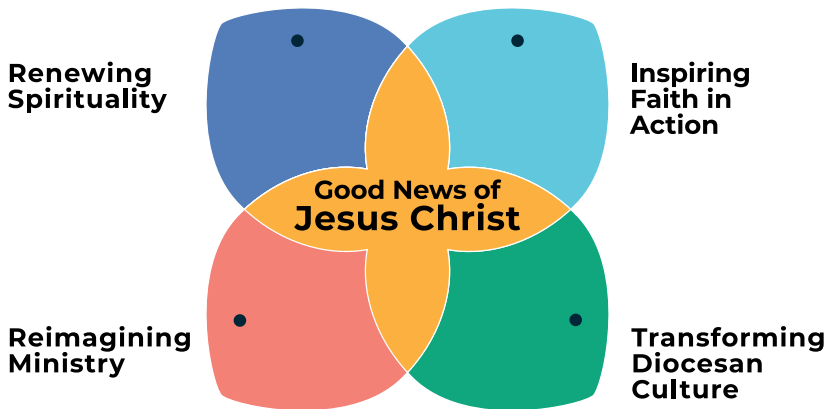
This Discussion Guide has been prepared as a companion piece to the Cast the Net Report. We hope the questions here will seed discussions and decisions in advisory boards, parish councils and other church groups as each parish and parishioner considers which of the Calls they will take up and make their own.

It invites you to look at each of the four themes with their Calls in turn. If needed, you can then prioritize the Call or Calls that best support and inspire your parish's ministry and mission. In doing this, you are encouraged to:

Choose the Calls that you believe you can answer now; the Calls that relate with the ministries you have now and connect with where you are located. In considering what is calling to your own parish, the hope is that you will find a natural connection to some; perhaps you are already committed to this ministry or you have already identified it as a priority for mission in your church.

Choose the Calls that will encourage your vision. Other Calls will speak to your vision and encourage you to try to stretch and try something new – to Cast your Net in a new way.

Choose a few that fit you best. Some churches might find that two or three are calling to them to be integrated into their vision and plans. Others might take up one Call, and still others can do more. Not all Calls speak to parish ministry directly. Choose what best fits your congregation at this time. You can always review the Calls again in the future while listening for where God is leading you next.



FOUR THEMES & 20 CALLS

At the centre is the GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST: we are followers of Jesus Christ, whose Good News is the joy and challenge at the heart of our common life. The four themes surrounding this core are statements that describe who we believe we are at our best, and what we try to be more and more every day, with God's help. Each theme has a set of Calls that will help us live into our vision.





THEME 1:

Renewing Spirituality



RENEWING SPIRITUALITY:

We are renewed daily in our spiritual lives and share our faith with others. In that spirit, all parts of the Diocese of Toronto are called to:

CALLS

1. Enter into a Season of Spiritual Renewal to deepen personal and collective discipleship.
2. Reinvigorate and recommit to children's, youth, family, and intergenerational ministries.
3. Share and use resources to enliven worship, faith formation, spiritual practice, and evangelism.

During the consultations, we heard a lot about the deep desire to grow our churches by attracting younger people. Many of us have treasured memories of our churches filled with children. We worry that our future is in danger if we don't attract more young people. We imagine that livelier worship and relevant programming will attract younger people.

Call #2 addresses this desire and commits the Diocese to resourcing ministry with children, youth and their families. However, you will also see that the Cast the Net Report is very clear that the renewal of the Church does not begin with getting more children, youth and families to come to church.

For many, this is difficult to accept, and we can have strong feelings about this. The demographic realities facing Canada, and generational changes in attitudes towards religion, mean that it is not reasonable or realistic to expect that we will recreate churches filled with young people. While it is true that some parishes may be able to take up Call #2, they are located in areas with lots of families and have the resources to offer attractive programming.

The growth and transformation of most of the Church will look different. It will be about our own growth – becoming more deeply rooted in our sense of God's presence in our lives and more able to articulate that presence with confidence and conviction.

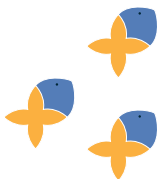
QUESTIONS

- A. Do any of these three Calls connect with your church's current ministry and mission? Which affirm and support what you are doing now?

How is your congregation living these now? What's going well?

- B. Considering the hopes, opportunities and challenges facing your congregation, which of these call you towards your future? Is there a Call that best upholds and encourages your parish's vision for its future – to stretch and grow?

What are some ideas for how might this happen?





THEME 2:

INSPIRING FAITH IN ACTION



INSPIRING FAITH IN ACTION:

We seek justice for all, walk alongside those in need, and respond with loving service and prophetic advocacy. In that spirit, all parts of the Diocese of Toronto are called to:

CALLS

4. Recognize and act on opportunities to participate in God's healing work in the world.
5. Make explicit connections between following Jesus and working for justice and peace.
6. Strengthen Indigenous ministry; engage non-Indigenous Anglicans in reconciliation work.
7. Take, sustain and communicate actions that promote diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism.
8. Intensify advocacy and action in response to the climate crisis.

Parishes in the Diocese of Toronto are deeply committed to offering compassionate service to those in need. In the Cast the Net listening groups, lay participants talked about the many ways that their own local congregations are involved in witness and action. The Diocese also has a long history of speaking out on matters of social justice and working in partnership with social agencies and government to foster a just and compassionate society.

We are already doing a great deal of good work through the Diocese's Social Justice and Advocacy consultant and committee and the support of FaithWorks for ministries to people in need, as well as through individual parish and congregational initiatives. This work needs to be celebrated and lifted up, nurtured and supported, synergized and redoubled.

QUESTIONS

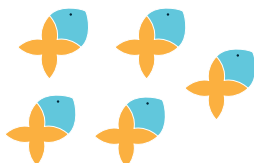
- A. The Calls in this section invite us to “tap into the real concern about the world we live in, work in the community, get involved in people’s lives and continue Christ’s work.”

Which of these five Calls connect with your church's current ministry and mission? Which affirm and support what you are doing now?

How is your congregation living these now? What can you celebrate?

- B. Considering the opportunities and challenges of your parish and the communities and neighbourhoods you serve, which of these Calls encourage and uphold your parish's vision for growing and extending your faith in action?

What are some ideas for how this might happen?





THEME 3:

REIMAGINING MINISTRY



REIMAGINING MINISTRY:

We support and encourage faithful and fruitful ministry by all who serve the life of the Church. In that spirit, all parts of the Diocese of Toronto are called to:

CALLS

9. Actively embrace collaboration among congregations and innovation in new forms of ministry.
10. Better reflect the diversity of our communities in both congregations and clergy.
11. Understand the changing needs of lay leaders in congregations and support them in their work.
12. Continue and enhance support for all ordained people.
13. Enable and celebrate the work of ministries focused on service in the world.
14. Rethink clergy discernment, formation and deployment for the Church of the future.
15. Introduce and use new ways to measure and nurture congregational health and effectiveness.

Pandemic-related shutdowns deeply affected parish life and other diocesan ministries. Everything was impacted: long-time lay volunteers either had nothing to do or had their work radically reoriented; clergy ministries changed, Zoom was introduced and churches learned to expand their online presence. Since the ending of the pandemic shutdowns, Sunday gatherings for worship and community engagement have resumed, as have ministries of outreach and chaplaincy. But it's not the same as it was. Many long-time volunteers are no longer willing or able to work in the same ways. Online gatherings continue to engage with people, especially those who are unable to attend Sunday church services in person.

In response, the listening groups identified a number of areas that are ripe for change that are reflected in the seven Calls of this theme. They include Calls focusing on congregations and on clergy, on our need to embrace regional collaboration and develop innovative ministries, to celebrate and grow in diversity, and to find new ways to support lay and clergy leaders. There is also a focus on supporting and encouraging clergy at all stages of their ministry – from helping people recognize and respond to God's call to ordained ministry to their training and deployment.

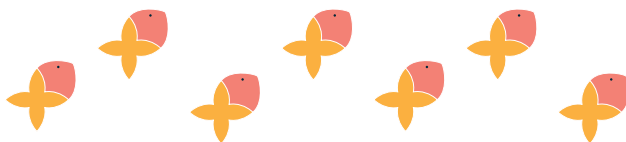
QUESTIONS

- A. Which of these seven Calls connect with your church's current ministry and mission? Which affirm and support what you are doing now?

How is your congregation living these now? What is going well?

- B. Considering the hopes, opportunities and challenges facing your congregation, which of these call you towards your future? Is there a Call that best upholds and encourages your parish's vision for its future – to stretch and grow?

What are some ideas for how this might happen?





THEME 4:

TRANSFORMING DIOCESAN CULTURE



TRANSFORMING DIOCESAN CULTURE:

We live and work as the Body of Christ, each member connected to the whole, and each valued for their unique gifts. In that spirit, all parts of the Diocese of Toronto are called to:

CALLS

16. Cultivate an understanding of the Diocese as a dynamic net of shared relationships.
17. Continue assessing recent diocesan leadership changes and adjust as necessary.
18. Adopt an integrated, theologically informed approach to property management.
19. Ensure follow-through on this Report, including implementation methods and metrics.
20. Invest in the vision with existing and new resources, using sound Christian stewardship principles.

The Diocese of Toronto is made up of more than 200 worshipping communities stretching over 26,000 square kilometres. It is both the largest urban and the largest rural diocese in Canada, and it encompasses a greater diversity than any other diocese. It is a large and complex system of many parts and many people.

The listening groups revealed many different experiences and lots of feelings about “the Diocese.” These ranged from the desire to be more diocesan in focus rather than parochial, to being frustrated or trying to ignore it as much as possible.

The listening groups identified that relationships between the bishops, diocesan staff, clergy and lay people are often seen as a hierarchy with the bishops and 135 Adelaide Street East at the top, the lay people in parishes on the bottom, and the clergy somewhere in between. In response, the Cast the Net consultations reimagined relationships among the different parts of the Diocese moving from this perceived pyramid structure to that of a network. This is a perspective shift that encourages us all to see ourselves as part of an interconnected web that can generate, share and participate in new ways for the sake of growing Anglican ministry and mission throughout the Diocese.

Aspects of this are found in the five Calls of this theme. They range from encouraging a new understanding that will shape our relationships differently through to monitoring the recent changes in diocesan leadership that created archdeaconries and archdeacons. They also include the emerging focus of the stewardship of our properties, and finally our commitment to implementing the vision we have cast with Cast the Net.

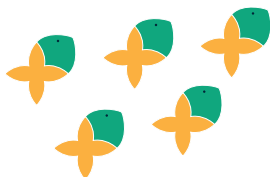
QUESTIONS

A. Which of these five Calls connect with your church?

Which affirm and support you now?

B. Considering the hopes, opportunities and challenges facing your congregation, is there a Call in this list that upholds and encourages your parish’s vision for its future?

What are some ideas for how this might happen?





CHOOSING YOUR CALLS

List the Calls that you have identified as connecting most closely with your ministry today (the Calls chosen in **QUESTION A.** from each theme.)

List the Calls that you have identified as upholding and encouraging your parish's vision (the Calls chosen in **QUESTION B.** from each theme.)

















If needed, prioritize these calls,
preferably choosing *no more than three*
that you would be willing to share eagerly with others
in the Diocese as the Cast the Net Calls to your parish.

Then let your bishop, archdeacon or Canon Janet Marshall, director of Congregational Development (jmarshall@toronto.anglican.ca), know which you have chosen so we can encourage and support you in living this vision.