

## The Origin and Growth of the Anglican Church in Newfoundland and Labrador

(Adapted from Bishop Peddle's Book, *The Church Lads' Brigade in Newfoundland: A People's Story*, Flanker Press, 2016)

### The Beginning of the Anglican Church

The first Europeans to visit Newfoundland and Labrador were probably the Norse around AD1000<sup>1</sup> although they did not stay for long and it would not be until 1497 with John Cabot's arrival from Bristol in England that uninterrupted contact with Europe would begin. It would still take another 200 years for permanent European settlement to take hold. Initially, the Europeans were not impressed by the place and deemed Newfoundland and the northern region of Labrador unfit for sustained human habitation and better used as a base for cod fishing in the summer. Sir Humphrey Gilbert declared Newfoundland to be England's first overseas colony in 1583 but by and large the area was treated as a seasonal fishing ground for sailors who arrived in the spring and left in the fall. The British Crown referred to Newfoundland as a "nursery of seamen" into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, implying that its greatest value lay in the training that generations of fishermen received there as preparation for service in the Royal Navy.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to other English possessions in North America, Newfoundland did not benefit from the establishment of stable institutions during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and remained underdeveloped socially, economically and politically. The so-called "Western Adventurers," fishermen and merchants from the West Country of England, had argued against permanent settlement in Newfoundland for a variety of reasons. Among their arguments were the following: Newfoundland was not suited to settlement because of its climate and soil, the residents of Newfoundland lured seamen and laborers away from their homes and families in the West Country, a Newfoundland-based fishery would unfairly compete with that of England, and it would be a drain on the English government to maintain year-round jurisdiction over Newfoundland.<sup>3</sup>

Around the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century a group of residents in Newfoundland known as "Planters" gained the ear of influential people in England and pleaded their case for a permanent presence. By that time the British government had a change of heart regarding its overseas possessions and began to establish in Newfoundland some of the basic structures needed for a permanent colony. However, compared to New England, Newfoundland still had a tiny population and continued to be perceived by many in England as little more than a summer fishing station. The French were competing for control of North America, making the case of the Planters that much stronger and finally convincing the government that Newfoundland had strategic value because of its fishing grounds and location in North America. In 1699 the English Parliament passed "An Act to Encourage the Trade to Newfoundland" known as the Newfoundland Act, accepting that Newfoundland should become a year-round residence for some fishermen and their families and imposing a small measure of stability upon a colony operating without any clear-cut legal system:

King William's Act in 1699 attempted to compromise between the need for settlers to protect Britain's claim to the island, and the protection of ... the West Country migratory fishery. Though frequently ignored, this "Newfoundland Act" remained the constitutional law of Newfoundland for the next century

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<sup>1</sup> Helge Ingstad and Anne Stine Ingstad, *The Viking Discovery of America: The Excavation of a Norse Settlement in L'anse Aux Meadows, Newfoundland*. (St. John's: Breakwater, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> D. W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial and Foreign Records*, 2nd ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1896). See also: William Cobbett, "*Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England from the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the Year, 1803.*" (London: R. Bagshaw, 1806). p. 382.

<sup>3</sup> C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976. pp. 36-38.

... To discourage the settled population from growing large enough to interfere with the migratory fishery, no government services were to be provided to the residents during the winter.<sup>4</sup>

The historian Ruth Christensen's description of life in Newfoundland during that time is consistent with that of other historians:

Settlers were sparsely scattered among the innumerable coves, harbors, and bays of a long, rugged seaboard. The colonists suffered from the lack of schools and other humanizing forces, while isolation wrought changes in once familiar mores ... The moral tone of the colony was adversely affected by the large consumption of rum and other liquors. A harsh environment forced inhabitants to become ingenious, self-reliant, and industrious; a livelihood and the basic necessities for life itself were the most immediate concerns of the islanders. Medical care, education, and spiritual welfare were important only after the problems of survival had been met.<sup>5</sup>

Until the 1700s the great majority of clergy from the Church of England to visit Newfoundland were clerics onboard sailing vessels destined for places like New England and elsewhere in British North America so their brief stopovers did not lead to any lasting church presence. There were clerics stationed temporarily in one or another of the proprietary settlements such as Ferryland in the 1600s but generally the only Anglican worship services in Newfoundland throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries were sporadic services conducted by laypersons. The government policy that hindered permanent civil and legal structures in Newfoundland was reflected by the Church of England. As essentially an arm of the British government, the church took its direction from the crown and depended upon the government for financial and material support. Until the political authorities saw a need to establish a permanent administrative presence in Newfoundland, the Church of England would not get the backing it needed to station clergy and erect places of worship. Significantly, it would not be until 1729 that the first naval governor was appointed, remaining on the island for only part of the year. The first resident civil governor for Newfoundland was not appointed until 1825.

The fishery remained the sole pillar of the Newfoundland economy although it was frequently an unstable pillar. Frequent attacks by the French against the English in Newfoundland during the war lasting from 1701 to 1713 caused a severe decrease in the number of fishing vessels from England willing to take the risk of spending a summer in Newfoundland and brought immense hardship for the residents of Newfoundland. Even if fish was caught, it was often too dangerous to deliver it to market in countries like Portugal and Spain. The winter months often proved to be even more difficult for the permanent inhabitants of Newfoundland when the fishing fleet departed for England. Social life was quite unstable, there were no schools or churches, and the winter was a time of drinking and carousing for many. A description of religious life in Newfoundland from 1700 by Thomas Bray, an English cleric enroute to Maryland, reveals the deprived spiritual state of the island:

Can any one believe it when he is told, that from such a Nation so little care has been taken, with respect to such a Colony, that there neither was, nor is, any Preaching, Prayers or Sacraments or any Ministerial and Divine Offices, performed on that Island; but that they should be suffered to live as those who know no God in the world.<sup>6</sup>

Bray recommended that two or more missionaries be sent to work among the people. In 1699, the year before Bray wrote his report, a French Roman Catholic missionary in Placentia, where Catholic priests had regularly served since 1662, observed that even though there were 20 English settlements larger than Placentia in

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<sup>4</sup> Jeff A. Webb, "Leaving the State of Nature: A Locke-Inspired Political Community in St. John's, Newfoundland, 1723," *Acadiensis* XXI, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): p. 157.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth M. Christensen, "The Establishment of S.P.G. Missions in Newfoundland, 1703-1783," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* XX, no. 2 (June 1951). p. 209.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Bray, *A Memorial representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North America* (London: 1700). p. 10.

Newfoundland there was not one English or Anglican missionary permanently stationed among them. The people of those settlements, according to the French missionary, "do not know what religion they belong to."<sup>7</sup>

In 1699 the people of St. John's petitioned the Bishop of London, Henry Compton, for a resident clergyman. In 1701 the bishop appointed, under his own authority, the Reverend John Jackson as the first resident Church of England cleric to Newfoundland. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) which also came into being in 1701 in order to recruit missionaries for the colonies and funnel aid to them facilitated the appointment of many more clergy to Newfoundland throughout that century.

### **A Church Shaped by a Missionary Society**

The SPG and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) that supplied religious literature were both essential to the establishment and development of the Church of England in Newfoundland. Missionaries were recruited in England by the SPG and appointed and paid by the organization.<sup>8</sup> In Newfoundland the SPG seems to have had a free hand in the absence of effective local episcopal oversight. In fact, until 1787 with the appointment of the first resident bishop in Canada at Halifax, all clerics to serve in Newfoundland were appointed by the SPG and reported to it. In Britain, voluntary societies were subservient to a diocese and bishop, but that was not so in Newfoundland. The absence of effective local episcopal oversight and the lack of ecclesiastical structures in Newfoundland meant that a voluntary society like the SPG operated with wide latitude and independence in its work. The result was an Anglican Church in Newfoundland that was created, funded, administered and shaped by a missionary society. The early years were particularly difficult for the few missionaries who had to adjust to a place for which nothing in their former lives in England could have prepared them:

The unstable and dangerous circumstances prevalent in Newfoundland made life very difficult for any missionary. Inadequate or nonexistent housing, coupled with little or no indigenous support (financial or material), were but two of the problems confronting the early missionaries. A lack of church buildings among the widely scattered outposts added to the difficulties. An uneducated and largely illiterate population did not help. For the clergymen sent from England, it was a painful adjustment to minister to "simple fisher folk shut off from the cultural influences of their ancestral homeland." Indeed, comparisons between church life in Newfoundland and England during the seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth century are strained to the point of being ludicrous. England had established church structures and a population receptive to institutional religion. In Newfoundland, the seeds had barely been sown.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the population of Newfoundland continued to grow with modest immigration from England and Ireland. A French presence on the island was all but eliminated as France gave up its claim to Newfoundland in the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. Seven years later, in the Treaty of Paris, the small islands of St Pierre et Miquelon off the south coast of Newfoundland were ceded to France as its last remaining fishing outpost on the continent of North America.<sup>10</sup> During this period the aboriginal population of the island declined severely from diseases brought by the Europeans, as well as encounters with settlers. The last known survivor of the native population of Beothuks was a woman named Shanawdithit who died in 1829.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> J. Langtry, *History of the Church in Eastern Canada and Newfoundland*. (London: SPCK, 1892), p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred W. Newcombe, "The Appointment and Instruction of S.P.G. Missionaries," *Church History* 5 (1936).

<sup>9</sup> Geoff Peddle, "The Reverend Jacob Rice: Anglican Ministry and Preaching in Early Eighteenth Century Newfoundland" (Thesis (MA), Memorial University of Newfoundland., 1996). p. 9. The quotation is from page 210 of Christensen.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Roberts Smallwood and Cyril F. Poole, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, 5 vols. (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1981). See: "St Pierre and Miquelon."

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, *Into All Lands: The History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1950*, pp. 120-121. See also: Smallwood and Poole, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. See: "Shanawdithit."

No bishop was appointed to serve in British North America until the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century because the British government did not see any urgency in placing a bishop in the colonies even though there had been discussions of the possibility. The attitude of the government changed following the American Revolution. A campaign by numerous colonial leaders convinced the Crown that the absence of a bishop in the American colonies had worked in favour of those who promoted the rebellion. A resident bishop, it was argued, would enhance loyalty to the Crown.<sup>12</sup> In 1787 Charles Inglis was appointed the first bishop for Nova Scotia with episcopal jurisdiction over all of British North America.<sup>13</sup> At that time there were a total of 37 clergy in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Lower Canada, Upper Canada, Newfoundland and Bermuda.<sup>14</sup> Nominated by the Crown, he was consecrated bishop at Lambeth Palace Chapel in August of 1787, just days after *letters patent* created the "Bishoprick of Nova Scotia and its Dependencies."

Prior to the appointment of Charles Inglis, the Bishop of London exercised a limited and rather distant form of supervision over the Diocese of Nova Scotia. As a result, the clergy of the diocese had grown accustomed to operating outside of any direct episcopal oversight and, therefore, resented what they perceived as an intrusion when the new bishop came on the scene.<sup>15</sup> Before the influx of loyalist clergy around the time of the American Revolution all clergy in the Maritimes were directly appointed from England by the SPG and worked under the control of the SPG office in England rather than a local authority. Indeed, every Anglican cleric under Inglis' supervision when he became bishop in 1787 drew his salary from the SPG.<sup>16</sup> Inglis began, in 1788, to assert his authority over the clergy from as far away as Newfoundland and Bermuda by holding regular "visitations" with them in which they were brought together for consultation and discussion.<sup>17</sup> However, residual tension remained between the bishop and the SPG-appointed missionaries for many years:

Here was a colonial bishop who was supposed to have the power to exercise complete authority over the clergy, and yet the continuance of a missionary society in an episcopal system automatically restricted his effective leadership. Thus, while in principle the Church was authoritarian in character, in practice the centralization of control in England meant that the individual missionaries in the colonies were free of almost any control.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to its missionary work, the SPG also took on a broad role in education that was relatively independent of local ecclesiastical control. Most missionaries appointed to Newfoundland would also become schoolmasters with the first school established at Bonavista in 1722 or 1723 and the next at St John's in 1744. Between 1766 and 1824 over 20 more schools were established but by 1836 the educational role of the SPG had been reduced. It ended its involvement in education in 1843 and handed over all remaining schools to the Newfoundland School Society.<sup>19</sup> The Newfoundland School Society that succeeded the SPG in its educational role had been set up in 1823 in Britain as the first benevolent society with the aim of educating the poor in the colonies. Its goal in the beginning was to provide both schools and schoolmasters for the children of Newfoundland's fishermen. Its first school opened in St John's in 1823 and within 10 years there were 43 such schools in operation.<sup>20</sup> In the case of both the SPG and the Newfoundland School Society their funding and staffing were controlled from England and

<sup>12</sup> Thomas R. Millman and A. R. Kelley, *Atlantic Canada to 1900: A History of the Anglican Church* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1983). p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Fingard, "Inglis, Charles," in *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983). pp. 445-446.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Mockridge, *The Bishops of the Church of England in Canada and Newfoundland* (Toronto: F.N.W. Brown, 1896). p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Cuthbertson, "Charles Inglis: A Reassessment," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* 30, no. 2 (1988).

<sup>16</sup> W.S MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965). p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> Fingard, "Inglis, Charles." pp. 445-446.

<sup>18</sup> ———, "Charles Inglis and His 'Primitive Bishoprick' in Nova Scotia," *The Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (1968). p. 263.

<sup>19</sup> Edward James Lear, "Edward Feild (1801-1876), Ecclesiastic and Educator: His Influence on the Development of Denominational Education in Newfoundland" (Thesis (M. Ed.), Bishop's University, 1986). p. 37. See also James B. Healey, "An Educational History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Newfoundland, 1703-1850" (Thesis (M Ed ), Memorial University of Newfoundland., 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Ronald Rompkey, ed. *The Diary of Bishop Edward Feild in 1844* (St. John's: ISER Books, 2010). p. 35.

it would not be until long after the appointment of the first bishop in Newfoundland that the denominational school system would come fully under local control. Some of the SPG missionaries to Newfoundland also provided health care with several early clergy also being medical missionaries. A good example was the Rev. Dr. John Clinch, an associate of Edward Jenner in his work on the Smallpox vaccine, who actually tested samples of the vaccine in Newfoundland.<sup>21</sup>

The lack of clergy and any form of effective episcopal oversight meant that the Church of England in Newfoundland and Labrador developed largely as a laity-driven church, with individuals not in holy orders taking leadership in most of the isolated bays and coves around the island of Newfoundland and along the coast of Labrador. A Rev. Canon Smith, Rural Dean, noted in 1827 how scattered the eight Church of England clergy in Newfoundland were at the time (“Some Extracts from the Journal of Bishop Inglis”). Three were at St. John’s, and one each at Ferryland, Twillingate, Bonavista, Trinity, and Harbour Grace. The clergy and people of Newfoundland would not receive a visit from a bishop until 1827 when Bishop John Inglis (the son of Charles Inglis) came from Halifax to St. John’s by ship and then to Conception Bay, Trinity Bay and Notre Dame Bay. On this visit the Bishop even met Shanawdithit, the last of the Beothuck Indians of Newfoundland who was living with a local family. The Bishop stated that the journey was over 3000 miles.<sup>22</sup>

With the exception of a few larger centers, most parishes in Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries consisted of multiple congregations with just a single priest visiting all the points in the parish only sporadically. Lay people conducted much of the regular worship, including both burials and baptisms. Weddings were often scheduled when the priest was in town. From the beginning the “Ministry of the Laity” working alongside the “Ministry of the Ordained” was intrinsic to the life of the Anglican Church in Newfoundland. The primary worship service most inhabitants would have known was Morning or Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer led by a layperson. For example, the Rev. John Clinch reported that in 1793 in Trinity Bay he found in almost every community someone “who every Lord’s Day reads the Morning and Evening service of the Church of England to the inhabitants of his own or some Neighbour’s house.” The Church Register for Bonavista for 1822 records the death of Abraham Ackerman “who for more than forty years performed Divine service in the Established Church and kept the congregation together during the above period.”<sup>23</sup>

For the Anglicans who had come almost totally from the West Country of England there remained a memory of their ancestral homeland and church but it was also clear that the Church of England would manifest itself differently in Newfoundland and Labrador. The strong lay ownership and leadership of both men and women made it very much a church of the people. The English population was well disposed to all things British but would also adapt all things British to local need. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with improvements to travel and the demise of many scattered communities did the average Anglican become used to seeing a priest every Sunday.

## **A New Diocese is Created**

In 1839 Newfoundland finally received its own resident Bishop, Aubrey George Spencer, when diocesan status was granted, creating the Diocese of Newfoundland and Bermuda. Formerly the Archdeacon of Bermuda, Spencer took over a diocese employing just eight clergy with a jurisdiction that included the island of Newfoundland, the coast of Labrador, as well as Bermuda. In 1841 Spencer visited Twillingate and 27 settlements, confirmed 757 persons, consecrated 6 churches and 5 cemeteries, and discussed the repair of 15 churches. He would later describe his travels in the vast diocese – “the highroad of which is upon the seas” as difficult.<sup>24</sup> One of Bishop Spencer’s most important acts was to establish in 1841 a theological college for the diocese known as Queen’s College. So

<sup>21</sup> Geoff Peddle, "The Rev. Dr. John Clinch of Trinity: Medical Pioneer and Missionary," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (1986).

<sup>22</sup> Millman and Kelley, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> Millman and Kelley, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 93-95.

successful was the college in training clergy locally that by the time Bishop Edward Feild took over in 1844 there were 24 clergy in the diocese, some trained at the new Queen's College and others recruited from England.<sup>25</sup> A notable accomplishment for Feild was a visit to the northern reaches of his charge in Labrador where in 1848 he became the first Anglican Bishop to visit the land, inaugurating a continuous Anglican presence from that time onward. Concerned for Labrador long before then, Feild wrote in 1845 about the summer fishery on that north coast: "Hundreds of our people go to the Labrador with their families every summer, and never see a church or a clergyman during their stay." In a letter to a friend in England in which he reflected upon visiting Labrador, Feild would write: "... you can imagine something of the feelings of a bishop lighting upon a portion of his diocese, which neither he nor any of his clergy have visited before, and which he has reason to believe has never been visited by any Christian Bishop."<sup>26</sup>

Bishop Feild, like the bishops before him, had to travel his vast diocese mainly by ship and in 1844 the first Newfoundland church ship, the *Hawk*, was acquired. It served the Bishop of Newfoundland until 1869 when the *Star* replaced it, followed in 1872 by the *Lavrock* that served the diocese until her loss in 1909. A new ship was then acquired, the *Amazon*, followed by the *Argonaut*, and then the *Happy Adventure*. Indeed, the bishop of Newfoundland and Labrador would have a ship at his disposal to visit the outlying parts of the vast Diocese until the time of Bishop Philip Abraham in the late 1940s. As an article in *The Diocesan Magazine* from July-August, 1939, began, "In an island diocese of some 6000 miles of coastline, without roads, and with the people living in small settlements all along the seaboard and in many instances on separate islands, a church ship was absolutely necessary to the effective supervision and maintenance of the work of the Church." Notably, some of the clergy in isolated parishes also maintained smaller boats to enable them to visit the people of their charge.

Feild pushed hard for the various missions to become self-sustaining and asked the laity to contribute more toward the support of the clergy, initially meeting with protest but eventually convincing the people to support their local ministry more fully. He did not want the church to remain dependent upon assistance from the Church in England but to become fully independent. This meant that the church had to seek support from the local population and the inhabitants knew from the time of Feild onward that if there was to be an Anglican Church in Newfoundland they must provide for it themselves.<sup>27</sup> In line with Feild's desire to see the Church of England in Newfoundland fully developed, he established the Church of England Orphanage in 1855 and it would remain in operation until the 1960s. Both a boys' and a girls' orphanage operated in St. John's to provide a home for Anglican children from across Newfoundland and Labrador. The orphanages were supported by donations of money or goods from individuals, congregations and parishes as well as from private business enterprises. They were also sustained by extensive farmlands that were cultivated to provide a continuous supply of vegetables and dairy products.<sup>28</sup> To better care for his clergy families he established a "Clergy Widow and Orphan Fund" in 1857 inspired by the unexpected death of several clergy (often by drowning).<sup>29</sup> Bishop Edward Feild served until his death in 1876 while visiting the Bermuda part of his diocese and was buried there.

In 1876, James Kelly, the assistant to Feild, assumed the role of Bishop, however, he lasted only one year in the role before ill health forced his resignation. Llewellyn Jones followed him and served for 39 years. It was under Jones' leadership that the CLB was introduced to Newfoundland in 1892. Significantly, in 1879, a Bermuda Synod was incorporated but requested that Bishop Jones continue to occupy that see along with his own which he did until 1917 when the Bishop of Newfoundland and Labrador finally ended all responsibilities for Bermuda.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> E. Rex Kearley, *Queen's College 1841-1991* (St. John's: Jespersen Press, 1991). pp. 7,10.

<sup>26</sup> H.W. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of Edward Feild, D.D. Bishop of Newfoundland* (London: W. Wells Gardner, 1879). pp. 41, 76.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>28</sup> When the Church of England Orphanage for Boys and the Church of England Orphanage for Girls closed and their property sold, all proceeds were invested for the benefit of children and their families, becoming the Anglican Charitable Foundation for Children (ACFC), which continues to operate until the present day.

<sup>29</sup> Tucker, p 137.

<sup>30</sup> Millman and Kelley, pp. 121-126.

A low point in his episcopacy happened on July 8, 1892, when much of St John's burned to the ground, destroying the new Anglican Cathedral along with the homes of Jones and five of his clergy. [Pictures](#) The bishop, however, was able to inspire his people to contribute toward reconstruction of the cathedral and by 1905 the building was complete. It is important to note that the year of the Great Fire would mark the introduction of the Church Lads' Brigade to Newfoundland at the Cathedral and while the Brigade was forced to adapt to the disaster it maintained its early momentum.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Begins

Bishop Llewellyn Jones would serve until his death in 1918. William G. White, the first Newfoundland-born bishop, then took office until 1942. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century would be a time of great change for the Colony of Newfoundland and for the Anglican Church. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Newfoundland economy began to diversify, moving away from almost total dependence upon the fishery. Pulp and paper mills, mining, and a new cross-island railway all changed the way in which the people were able to earn a living. The First World War of 1914-1918 tragically altered Newfoundland forever and saw great numbers enlist, serve and die on both land and sea as Bishop Jones' address to Diocesan Synod in July, 1916, makes clear:

I venture to say that in proportion to our population and our resources Newfoundland is doing its duty as well as any other Colony of the Empire. Three thousand five hundred of the finest of our young men have gone, or are preparing to go to the front. Of these 1,400 are in the Naval Reserve ... Newfoundland has rendered, and we hope will continue to render by its Naval Reservists most valuable aid to the Mother Country in this war. We have thousands of hardy fishermen, who are all born sailors, and who make splendid blue jackets, and Newfoundland can thus give, what hardly any other Colony in the Empire can give, readymade sailors for the British Navy. And when they join, their officers report that for sobriety, good conduct, and obedience to discipline they cannot be surpassed. The same may be said of our lads who have enlisted in the Army, and of whom 2,100 are on active service. They, too, have received commendation from the English commanding officers under whom they served during their course of training in Scotland and Aldershot.

In 1927 the Privy Council in London, ruling in Newfoundland's favour over Canada, finally established the Labrador border, officially making Labrador and Newfoundland a single political entity and part of the same colony. A dispute arose when Canada claimed rights to much of Labrador after it became apparent that Labrador was rich in natural resources. The story is told that after the Newfoundland Prime Minister, William R. Warren (a former CLB Officer), returned from London where he successfully argued Newfoundland's case he declared that he had gone to England as a "Newfoundland Dog" but returned as a "Labrador Retriever!" In 1931 the Colony of Newfoundland was granted the status of Dominion but with the advent of the Great Depression and resulting economic difficulties the Dominion of Newfoundland reverted back to a colony. In 1934 it voluntarily surrendered its self-government in favour of a Commission of Government appointed by Great Britain with the task of administering Newfoundland and Labrador until such time as it was feasible for it to become independent again.<sup>31</sup>

When World War Two came in 1939, Newfoundland was quick to join with the rest of the British Empire in fighting Germany and its Axis allies. There was great anxiety for the future, particularly in light of the living memory of many who had lived through World War One. With that in mind, the bishop of the day, William White, in his monthly letter for January, 1940, quoted the words of King George VI in his 1939 Christmas broadcast to the British Empire: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown'; And he replied 'go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way!'" Bishop White called the Anglican Church in Newfoundland to four efforts in his first message of 1940:

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<sup>31</sup> Smallwood and Poole, *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. See: "Commission of Government."

- (1) I hope that everywhere in the Diocese Intercessions will be offered up to God very frequently, and especially at celebrations of the Holy Communion, on behalf of our King, his Councillors and his Empire that they may fulfill God's purpose for the world in this hour of crisis.
- (2) Wherever possible I trust that in each congregation from which men have gone they may be prayed for by name during the public services and by individuals in their private prayers.
- (3) It will be well for us to remember that our lads will be exposed to dangers wherever duty calls them, and that many of them will be faced with temptations which past experience has not prepared them to meet. They need our prayers, not only that they may be protected, if it be God's will, from dangers in battle but especially that they may be saved from moral evils which may endanger body and soul.
- (4) During 1914-1918 our Empire fought what was called "a war to end all war". We and our Allies were victorious, but no lasting peace was gained ... The reason was because the hearts of men were not changed: they remained full of hatred, ambition, selfishness and greed, and there was no room for real brotherhood. History will repeat itself unless and until the power of God is released for this alone can order and control the unruly wills and affections of sinful men ... It is for this spiritual victory that we need most of all to pray.

The episcopal leadership of the Anglican Church changed in 1942 as Philip Abraham succeeded William White. World War Two was a time of prosperity for Newfoundland and Labrador as tens of thousands of American and Canadian servicemen came and built a chain of bases in places like St. John's, Argentia, Gander, Stephenville, and Goose Bay. The Americans and Canadians not only brought prosperity but built port facilities, airstrips, roads, and power lines across Newfoundland and Labrador, creating new economic infrastructure and setting the stage for an even greater transformation to follow. In 1949, following two referenda, Newfoundland chose confederation with Canada over a return to independence, becoming the 10th province of Canada.<sup>32</sup> Significantly, the Diocese of Newfoundland joined "the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada" even before Confederation was official. In 1955, the Canadian church became the Anglican Church of Canada.

Confederation with Canada further transformed Newfoundland and Labrador society, leading to an increase in population and improvements in the health of the people as universal healthcare was available for the first time. Educational opportunities also grew as Canada's youngest province granted degree status in 1949 to the Memorial University College established in 1925. A government strategy called Centralization (also known as Resettlement) led to over 30,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans (about 10% of the population) moving from smaller, isolated coastal communities to larger and more easily serviced centres of growth. Over 200 communities were eventually abandoned.<sup>33</sup>

John A. Meaden followed Philip Abraham as the Anglican Bishop in 1955 and served until 1965 when Robert Seaborn became the last diocesan bishop for the Diocese of Newfoundland, for in 1976 it was restructured into three dioceses, each with their own bishop. The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador would be the direct successor of the former structure with its cathedral and synod office at St John's. Alongside the eastern diocese would be the Diocese of Central Newfoundland with its headquarters at Gander, and the Diocese of Western Newfoundland based at Corner Brook. Robert Seaborn would continue as the first Bishop for the new Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador until 1980 when Martin Mate was elected Bishop. The first Bishop for the new Diocese of Central Newfoundland would be Mark Genge. William Legge (previously Suffragan Bishop for the Diocese of Newfoundland) became the first Bishop for the Diocese of Western Newfoundland until Stewart Payne was elected in 1978.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. See: "Confederation."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. See: "Resettlement." See also: MemorialUniversity, "'No Great Future': Government Sponsored Resettlement in Newfoundland and Labrador since Confederation," Maritime History Archive, [http://www.mun.ca/mha/resettlement/rs\\_intro.php](http://www.mun.ca/mha/resettlement/rs_intro.php).

## The Anglicans of Newfoundland and Labrador Today

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century unfolded a major shift occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of its birthrate as families began to have ever-smaller numbers of children. The result for the Anglican Church was that fewer children would be part of the church. In 2003 the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador asked for a report on Parish Demographics, which revealed just how much had changed in less than 50 years. The Report from the Commission on Parish Demographics noted that the fertility rate for the province declined from 5.9 births per adult female in 1957 to 1.2 per female in 2000, falling from one of the highest in the world to one of the lowest. The conclusions were blunt to say the least:

The result is that births have declined to dangerous levels – unless, of course, we feel that children are an economic drain on society and declining births is a benefit. The period from the late fifties to mid-sixties ushered in the baby boom with over 15,000 babies born each year. By 2000, the number of births had reduced to fewer than 5,000 births per year. Fertility is a complex product of economic, social, and cultural as well as personal factors ... Projections indicate that births will drop to fewer than 2,500 births by 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2001). No society can sustain or support itself when its most important resource – its people – is declining at these rates. Unless offset through migration, a continued decline of young people in this province will have devastating effects on provincial social systems, including the religious institutions.<sup>34</sup>

Reports from the Province and Statistics Canada show that in 1976 there were 11,130 live births for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador but by 2014 that number declined to 4455 births annually. During the same period deaths increased from 3323 in 1976 to 4855 in 2014. *Regional Demographic Profiles Newfoundland and Labrador*<sup>35</sup> was published in November 2007 and painted a picture of continuing population decline from a combination of natural population change (births and deaths) and out-migration. The report identified the province as having the lowest birthrate in Canada. Adding to this was a growing movement of young persons away from the province. The impact of these demographic shifts on the Anglican Church was considerable as the church dealt with a rapidly aging population and a shifting membership base. In 2001, the last year in which the question was asked, roughly 36% of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador identified themselves as Roman Catholic, 26% identified as Anglican, with the rest split among various Protestant denominations.<sup>36</sup> In excess of 90% of the population considered themselves Christian.

There were two major demographic upheavals in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century affecting Newfoundland and Labrador. The first, called Centralization has already been noted and saw the relocation of people from outlying communities to larger towns within the province. This social disruption in the 1950s and 1960s driven by government policy prefigured a second upheaval affecting even more of the population in the 1990s driven by the collapse of the cod fishery. The second occurred when a Groundfish Moratorium ended the cod fishery because of low stocks resulting from overfishing and led to about 13% of the population actually leaving the province for good, reducing the provincial population from 580,109 in 1992 to 505,469 in 2006.

As already noted, the economic and social lifeblood of Newfoundland was its fishery. Since the earliest days of European visitors, the fishery determined not only settlement patterns on the coast but also the relative health and prosperity of communities. For four centuries fishermen came from Europe to fish alongside the local Newfoundlanders for cod and throughout most of that time the fishery was carried out in a sustainable manner relying upon nets and fishing lines. That all changed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as modern technology

<sup>34</sup> "Ministries in Action: Report of the Commission on Parish Demographics" (Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003). p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Newfoundland, "Regional Demographic Profiles: Newfoundland and Labrador, November 2007" ed. Economics and Statistics Branch Department of Finance (St. John's: Department of Finance, Rural Secretariat Executive Council, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> StatisticsCanada, *A National Overview, Population and Dwelling Counts, 2001 Census* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2002).

created a new generation of fishing vessels such as trawlers and draggers that came from places as far away as Russia, China and Japan. The cod stocks that had supplied North America and Europe for hundreds of years were decimated in less than 40 years resulting in what became known as the “Moratorium” of 1991 when the Government of Canada closed the cod fishery, paid fishermen to leave the industry, bought out fish processing plants all along the Newfoundland coast, and launched a massive effort to retrain fishermen for other types of work.<sup>37</sup> A way of life that had sustained the people for centuries finally disappeared, changing Newfoundland forever.<sup>38</sup>

Most communities lost population, some communities disappeared altogether, and there was considerable internal migration from town to town within the province as the people adapted in different ways to the change.<sup>39</sup> But the loss was felt unevenly with rural Newfoundland and Labrador much more affected. On the Avalon Peninsula, the overall population remained roughly the same as the people leaving were balanced by migration of others from the rest of the province. The result was that by the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century over half the population of Newfoundland and Labrador would live on the Avalon Peninsula with most of that growth happening on the Northeast Avalon in and around St. John’s, Mount Pearl, Paradise and Conception Bay South. The wider social world in which the Anglican Church operated had changed forever.

There was a great decline in formal church membership for the Anglicans of Newfoundland and Labrador as total official membership in the three dioceses declined from about 145,000 in 1976 to under 60,000 members by 2014 with the steepest decline happening after 2000. The decline in church membership reflected the final impact of the overall population loss that began in the 1990s. Although people had left the province in great numbers, many of them remained on their former parish rolls for years afterward. In the past, to be born into an Anglican family allowed people to claim membership in the Anglican Church, however, after 2000 many parishes updated their official membership list to better reflect their modern reality and tied their membership list for the first time to the names of those who actively contributed to the church. During this period large numbers of younger individuals and families who had effectively ceased affiliation for years were removed from parish lists. The most recent available annual statistical reports of the three Anglican Dioceses of Newfoundland and Labrador show that between 1976 and 2014 the total number of Baptisms declined from 2671 to 1139. During the same period the number of Anglican Church Weddings decreased from 989 to 376. Only Funerals increased in the three dioceses over the same 38 years from 1040 to 1263.<sup>40</sup> In conclusion, in the Anglican Church of Newfoundland and Labrador as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century began there were fewer children, fewer young couples having children, and more seniors than ever.

Of all the changes that affected the Anglican Church in Newfoundland and Labrador at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, none was more difficult than the collapse of the cod fishery and the resulting shifts in population around the province and out of the province. Stephen Nolan, in his book, *Leaving Newfoundland: A History of Out-Migration*, puts this modern reality in stark terms: “The province continues to be deeply affected by the problems that are caused when a massive amount of their youngest and brightest have moved on to better worlds.”<sup>41</sup> The same social factors that affected the Anglican Church also affected the other churches of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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<sup>37</sup> Rosemary Ommer, *The Resilient Outport: Ecology, Economy and Society in Rural Newfoundland*, Social and Economic Papers (St. John's: ISER Books, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence C. Hamilton, Richard L. Haedrich, and Cynthia M. Duncan, "Above and Below the Water: Social/Ecological Transformation in Northwest Newfoundland," *Population and Environment* 25, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>39</sup> Lawrence C. Hamilton and Melissa J. Butler, "Outport Adaptations: Social Indicators through Newfoundland's Cod Crisis," *Human Ecology Review* 8, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>40</sup> In the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador the numbers for 1976 and (2014) are as follows: Baptisms: 1092 (574), Weddings: 441 (159), Funerals: 470 (491).

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Nolan, *Leaving Newfoundland: A History of Out-Migration* (St. John's: Flanker Press Limited, 2007). pp. 160-161.