



Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

The Anglican Church of Canada

The Right Reverend Dr. Geoff Peddle, M.Div., Ph.D.
Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

ANGLICAN DIOCESAN CENTRE
19 King's Bridge Road
St. John's, NL A1C 3K4
Telephone: (709) 576-6697
Fax: (709) 576-7122
Email: geoffpeddle48@gmail.com

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My Dear People,

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on this final day of February. This letter continues my previous letter to you of January 17 in which I discussed the implementation of the decisions made at our recent Synod – *The Future of the Church and the Church of the Future*. As you know, at that Synod, the **Report of the Commission on Parish Renewal and Viability** called, *Surviving or Thriving: The Future of the Church in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador*, was presented after 14 months of research, and a series of 29 motions were passed. Some of the motions adopted at Synod of particular relevance to this letter include (*italics mine*):

“This Diocese will restructure itself so as to free up energy and resources to engage more strongly in *missional ministry* and improve efficiency in operations, such restructuring to include the Diocesan Office and parish organization and relationships.”

“That in commitment to *sustainable missional ministry* in accordance with the Diocesan Mission Statement parishes will reorganize themselves so as to give *greater emphasis to mission* than to the maintenance of structure. This reorganization will address parish governance, the merging of congregations in multi-point parishes where practicable and the amalgamation of adjoining parishes where appropriate.”

“That Parishes in geographic proximity to each other be organized into *Missions* to address the *common missional opportunities* of the area, such *Missions* to be defined by the appropriate Archdeaconry Council.”

In my last letter I appointed Archdeacon Gregory Mercer as the new Mission Archdeacon for our diocese and I have been working closely with him since that time. He has now met with both Archdeacons on the Avalon Peninsula portion of our diocese and in consultation with their membership identified eight areas for mission. In this letter I will be announcing those “Missions” and appointing four Mission Deans in line with the Report of the Commission adopted at Synod. The present Archdeacons and Territorial Archdeacons will continue unchanged. The four Mission Deans will initially be responsible for two Missions each and will report to the Mission Archdeacon as they work with the clerical and lay leadership of their various Missions. As you will see, the overriding principle in the creation of Missions was the geographical proximity between churches. There was no easy or convenient way to establish these Missions, however, the eight identified constitute our first attempt at bringing our people and churches together in a mission-based configuration.

Even within the Missions it is possible to see further sub-divisions and I anticipate that in the months ahead there will be adjustments to Missions and further appointments of Mission Deans or even changes to the present

appointments. The structure released today is both fluid and dynamic and will change as ministry needs and possibilities shift in the future. As you will note, the Missions identified are all on the Avalon Peninsula where many of our churches are minutes apart from one another. Labrador ministry is an entirely different challenge with incredibly vast distances between churches and so the creation of Missions where resources and skills can be conveniently shared is not always possible. The Territorial Archdeacon for Labrador, the Venerable Julie Brace, will continue her responsibilities in mission for our people there. In June, our Diocesan Executive Committee will meet for the first time in Happy Valley – Goose Bay and will discuss the shape of ministry in Labrador and how best the Mission of God (*Missio Dei*) should unfold across such an immense geography.

The clergy appointed today will hold the title of “Mission Dean” in our diocese for the next two years with the option of an additional year. They will function as part of an extended Cathedral Chapter during that time. On September 27 of this year there will be a special Mission Conference where it will be expected that the Mission Deans and the Mission Archdeacon will update our church on their progress to that point. The eight Missions identified by the Archdeaconry of the Avalon and the Archdeaconry of Trinity/Conception/Placentia are listed below. The Mission Dean for Conception Bay South and the Northeast Avalon will be **The Reverend Jolene Peters**. The Mission Dean for Mount Pearl/Goulds and St. John’s will be **The Reverend Jonathan Rowe**. The Mission Dean for Conception Bay North Central and Conception Bay North will be **The Reverend Christine Lynch**. The Mission Dean for Trinity Bay and the Isthmus will be **The Reverend Eli Evans**.

The Mission of Conception Bay South, The Reverend Jolene Peters (Mission Dean)

- St. Peter (Upper Gullies)
- All Saints (Foxtrap)
- St. John the Evangelist (Topsail)

The Mission of the Northeast Avalon, The Reverend Jolene Peters (Mission Dean)

- St. Philip (Portugal Cove/St. Philip’s)
- St. Lawrence (Portugal Cove/St. Philip’s)
- St. Mary/St. Cyprian (Bell Island)
- St. Nicholas (Torbay)
- All Saints (Pouch Cove)
- Holy Innocents (Paradise)

The Mission of Mount Pearl/Goulds, The Reverend Jonathan Rowe (Mission Dean)

- Petty Harbour/Bay Bulls/Aquaforte (3 Points)
- St. Paul (Goulds)
- Good Shepherd (Mount Pearl)
- Ascension (Mount Pearl)

The Mission of St. John’s, The Reverend Jonathan Rowe (Mission Dean)

- St. Michael and All Angels
- St. Augustine
- St. Mary the Virgin (2 points)
- The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
- St. Thomas
- St. Mark the Evangelist

The Mission of Conception Bay North Central, The Reverend Christine Lynch (Mission Dean)

- The Resurrection
- Port de Grave (2 Points)
- Bay Roberts/Coley's Point (2 Points)
- St. Mark (Shearstown/Butlerville)
- Spaniard's Bay (2 Points)

The Mission of Conception Bay North, The Reverend Christine Lynch (Mission Dean)

- Upper Island Cove (3 Points)
- Harbour Grace (2 Points)
- Carbonear

The Mission of Trinity Bay, The Reverend Eli Evans (Mission Dean)

- The Epiphany
- Heart's Content (2 Points)
- The Holy Trinity (6 Points)
- Bay de Verde (3 Points)

The Mission of the Isthmus, The Reverend Eli Evans (Mission Dean)

- The Living Water (4 Points)
- The Holy Cross (4 Points)
- The Holy Spirit (5 Points)

It is my hope that the congregations identified in each Mission will immediately enter into new conversations about their future together with an eye to fresh missional opportunities appropriate to their local contexts. The Mission Deans in conjunction with the Mission Archdeacon are now charged with the responsibility of facilitating these conversations and enabling our people to dream about a new future. From my perspective, the optimal outcome will be one where congregations and parishes in every Mission discover new possibilities themselves and share in life-giving ministries identified by the people. I long to see non-traditional ministries emerging where multiple churches and multiple clergy work together for the greater glory of God and for the care of God's children in creation. To that end, the diocese has now created a Mission Fund with a plan to increase that fund over the next couple of years so that appropriate financial resources are available for new ministries. I would welcome the breaking-down of parish boundaries so that mission teams of clergy and appropriately equipped lay leaders come together in ways that maximize each person's gifts. I foresee a future with fewer priests as rectors and administrators, and skilled lay people assuming new responsibilities. It is time to move beyond the traditional parish structure altogether in many places.

To borrow very freely from **1 Corinthians 12**: *Not all priests of our diocese should be rectors and administrators, but some are needed. Not all deacons of our diocese are skilled in ministry to children and youth, but some are quite talented. Not all lay leaders of our diocese are accomplished in pastoral ministry to seniors, but some are very skillful. Not everyone is a capable teacher or preacher, but some have these gifts. Not all priests are great liturgists, but some shine in that ministry.* A worthy goal in the days ahead is to discern the gifts and passions that have been given by God to each person for the building up of God's Church and ensure that these gifts are used in the best possible way for all.

I expect that the good work we begin today will continue for many years into the future. Let us be thorough and responsible in building upon the foundation we have been given, knowing that there will be others to come after us who will build upon *our* work. It is vital for us to carry out our responsibilities now to the best of our abilities so that the church renovations we pass to the next generation are not shoddy or substandard but built to the highest standard. I remind you that the workers who built those magnificent cathedrals in Europe, and indeed our own Cathedral, labored for decades and sometimes for centuries in their work. Those who began construction were

often not alive by the time construction was complete. But they labored in faith knowing that the great enterprise in which they were engaged was worthwhile and would one day be complete, bringing glory to God and creating an appropriate home for God's people. And so today, even if we cannot see the endpoint of our work, for that ending lies in God, let us build knowing that we are the workers appointed for this age with skills appropriate to the task at hand.

I continue with a few announcements for this year ...

I am honored to announce the appointment of **The Venerable Ronald Lee** to the position of Diocesan Archdeacon effective immediately. Archdeacon Lee has advised me of his intention to retire this spring from his role of Priest-in-Charge on Bell Island. As our oldest active priest at a mere 85 years of age with 60 years of ordained ministry it is appropriate that our church honor this faithful servant. The Venerable Ron Lee will retire with the honored title of **Diocesan Archdeacon**.

The formal installation of the **Cathedral Chapter and Mission Deans** will take place on the evening of Sunday, April 7, at 7 p.m. at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist. The date of the first meeting of the Chapter will be Monday, April 8 and Tuesday, April 9. I hope to gather the Deacons of our diocese for a similar overnight retreat on September 25.

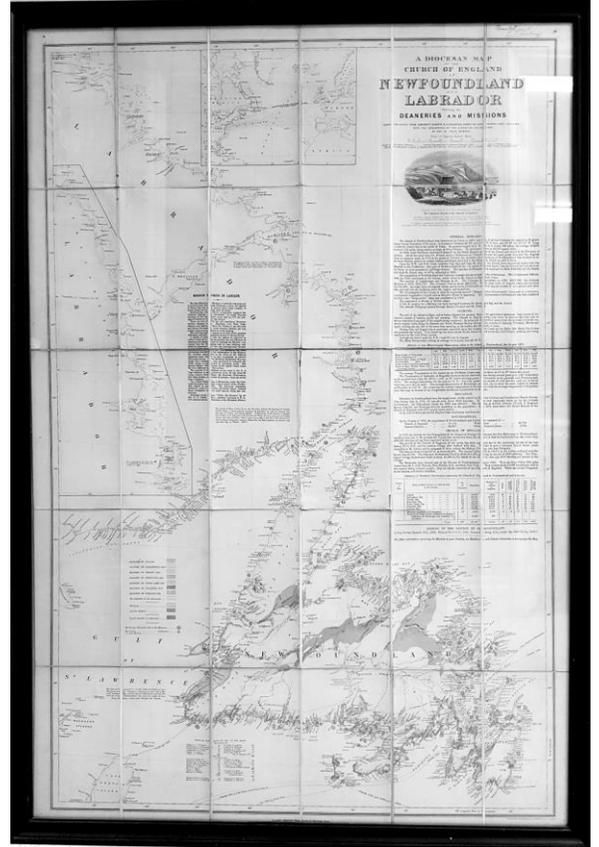
We will gather for a special Synod on September 28 to discuss **Marriage Equality**. This Synod will follow on the heels of our **Mission Conference** on September 27 and it is my hope that many Synod Delegates will be able to attend both. General Synod for the Anglican Church of Canada will take place in July of 2019.

This year also marks the 30th Anniversary of our **Lavrock Camp and Conference Centre**. We give thanks for the great blessing "The Lavrock" has been in our diocesan life and later this year will be holding a special celebration to honor the mission and ministry of the Lavrock.

Our Diocese is honored to host the **North American Godly Play Conference** in St. John's from June 20th to 22nd at the Sheraton Hotel. The theme of this year's conference – "*Come from Away – Come to Play*" – is inspired by the name of the hit musical "Come from Away" which was inspired in turn by a traditional Newfoundland expression for those not from the island. It also references the importance of play in Godly Play's faith formation of children. We are excited and honoured to be hosting this year's conference and to welcome guests and fellow Godly Play enthusiasts from around the globe. We look forward to visitors from Canada, the US, the UK, Europe and South Africa. It will be a time for all participants to deepen their understanding of the art and practice of Godly Play. Participants will have the opportunity to share in worship, seminars, addresses and storytelling while experiencing our genuine hospitality. Featured speakers for the conference include Dr. Elaine Champagne from the University of Laval who will explore Children's Spiritual Journeys; The Reverend Canon Dr. Andrew Sheldon (Godly Play Advocate for International Development) who will address our readiness as Godly Play practitioners from emotional, theological, pedagogical and spiritual perspectives; Dr. Rebecca Nye, a specialist in children's spirituality, and The Reverend Peter Privett, Chair of the Godly Play International Council who will discuss their common interest and work in children's spirituality and international training. In the spirit of play and learning there will be opportunities to hear familiar stories in unfamiliar languages (French, German, Spanish and Afrikaans), to attend workshops and presentations on a multitude of topics including the use of Godly Play stories at home, the theological significance of storytelling, using Godly Play in Vacation Bible Schools, Deepening Response Time ... and so much more! The North American Godly Play Conference in 2019 will be a wonderful opportunity to experience firsthand all that is happening in Godly Play, to meet old friends and make new friends, and to share and learn together in our beautiful island home.



I conclude this letter with a photograph from outside my office on King’s Bridge Road. It is a picture of a large-scale map from the 1870’s called **“A Diocesan Map of the Church of England in Newfoundland and Labrador showing the Deaneries and Missions.”** Notably, back then our church was organized into Missions! It is poignant for me as bishop almost 150 years later to re-establish Missions in this vast and ancient church of ours. The Christian Faith here began as a Mission of a Christian Faith elsewhere in places like England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland, France and Germany. In the case of the Church of England, the Gospel was actually carried here by people who were called Missionaries, supported in large part by the SPG – the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Our very roots as a church are missional. Much of our work now is recovering that mission in ways appropriate to our present. In a sense, after many years our mission has come full circle, for we return to where our story began. T.S. Eliot in *Little Gidding* wrote words appropriate to such a journey:



***We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.***

“... *the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started ... [but to] ... know the place for the first time.*” In *Little Gidding*, Eliot reflected on life and faith and how, ultimately, the end of every journey is God. That final encounter becomes even richer because of the journey. Eliot asserted that there is a deep and often unappreciated unity of past, present and future in life held together by God. The goal of life is to finally know that.

I end with this Prayer for Mission from our own Book of Alternative Services:

Draw your Church together, O Lord, into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving him in his mission to the world, and together witnessing to his love on every continent and island. We ask this in his name and for his sake.

With my every blessing on your Mission,

+*Geoffrey*