



Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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A Pastoral Letter on the Fifth Anniversary of Consecration as Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

15 December 2025

Commemoration of Simon Gibbons, First Priest from the Inuit

My dear beloved family in Christ,

Today marks the fifth anniversary of my Consecration as your Bishop. It is profoundly moving and significant that this milestone falls when the Church holds in honoured memory the Reverend Simon Gibbons, the first Inuk priest to serve in what is now the Anglican Church of Canada - a son of Labrador whose faithful ministry continues to inspire us and remind us of our sacred calling to walk in solidarity with our Indigenous siblings in Christ, to honour their leadership, and to reinforce this ministry in every corner of our Diocese.

Simon Gibbons knew what it was to walk long distances in harsh weather, to build churches with his own hands and to preach the Gospel in places where no road yet existed. He carried the love of Christ across frozen bays and through deep snow because he knew that the Good Shepherd leaves no sheep behind. His life was a living sermon on perseverance and the power of an Indigenous voice proclaiming the Gospel in its fullness.

Five years ago, when God called me to this ministry among you, I knew that Simon Gibbons was walking with us in spirit. His example has never left me. He reminds us that the Anglican Church in this land is not complete until Indigenous voices, Indigenous leadership, and Indigenous ways of worshipping are not only welcomed but placed at the very centre of our common life as a Diocese.

We began this journey together five years ago in the darkest days of the global pandemic. Churches were closed, families were separated, anxiety filled our communities, and many of us wondered whether the Church would survive such a storm. Yet God did not abandon us. God led us through those rough waters by Zoom and telephone, through masked baptisms and online worship, and God has never ceased to lead us. The same faithful hand that steered us then is steering us now, and I give thanks for every sign of God's presence among us.

I am deeply grateful to our Clergy who serve with such faithfulness and devotion in often challenging circumstances; for our Lay Leaders, Wardens, Vestries, and Parishes, who have given so generously of their time, talent, and treasure; and for the wider Church and Anglican Communion, which has upheld us in prayer. You all have carried me, and together we have held one another. Thanks be to God for each and every one of you.

In 2022, we launched **Set Sail: Charting the Course for Christ's Church**, our Diocesan Strategic Plan under the guidance of Angela Morgan and the Set Sail team. We have made genuine progress: new ministries have begun, some congregations have grown, while others have found imaginative ways to remain faithful amid decline. We have also learned to listen more attentively to the Holy Spirit and to one another.

Over the past three years, we have spent our time prayerfully discerning and setting Diocesan and parish goals rooted in the four Ships of Set Sail: **Deepening Relationships, Transforming Discipleship, Renewing Stewardship, and Engaging Partnerships**. Now is the time to take these goals further and to expand them by living them out ever more fully and intentionally through the **Five Marks of Mission** of the Anglican Communion. These five marks are the Anglican Communion's statement of what it means for the Church to be sent out into the world. They are our compass and our chart for discipleship and ministry.

Let me share the **Five Marks of Mission** again, with a brief word of explanation for each:

Mark 1: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

The mark of evangelism and witness - telling the story of Jesus so that others may come to know, love, and follow him.

Mark 2: To teach, baptize and nurture new believers

The mark of discipleship and Christian formation - helping people grow into mature disciples through the whole journey of faith.

Mark 3: To respond to human need by loving service

The mark of mercy and compassion - the Church doing what Jesus did: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, welcoming the outcast.

Mark 4: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

The prophetic mark - naming systemic evil and working for justice, including walking the long road of truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Mark 5: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The mark of creation care - living as grateful stewards of God's Creation, urgently needed in this fragile Earth, our island home.

These **Five Marks of Mission** are an integrated whole. When we live all of them, including our local outreach and community involvement, we become the faithful, authentic, and transforming presence that Christ calls us to be in our parishes and beyond.

To lead us more intentionally in this work, I am establishing a **New Cathedral Chapter** for the triennium 2026–2029, with specific Canons charged with animating and resourcing the Diocese in each Mark of Mission.

Mark 1: Canon for Evangelism and Witness

Rev. Canon Deborah Pantin

Mark 2: Canon for Discipleship and Christian Formation

Rev. Canon Amber Tremblett

Mark 3: Canon for Mercy and Loving Service

Rev. Canon Byron Barter

Mark 4: Canon for Justice and Peace

Rev. Canon Amanda Taylor

Mark 5: Canon for Creation Care and Stewardship

Canon David Morgan

Also, to keep us aligned with and accountable to our Indigenous siblings in Christ, I am pleased to reappoint Canon Thomas Mugford as the **Canon for Truth, Reconciliation, and Right Relationships**.

I am thankful for Canon Tom, who has already served this Diocese with such grace and wisdom in the ministry of reconciliation, and who will continue to help us build right relationships and accountability with Indigenous peoples and the Indigenous Church across this land.

I have written a personal Mandate Letter to each of these Canons, which will be available on our Diocesan website, charging them with specific ways to embody and advance their assigned Mark of Mission throughout the Diocese. In each Mandate Letter, I have also asked them to establish an Advisory Council that will draw members from across the whole Diocese, ensuring that the voices, experience, and wisdom of the entire diocesan family shape how we live out these Marks of Mission in practice.

Also, other essential and Constitutional appointments to the Cathedral Chapter include the following:

The Dean of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador & Commissary

The Very Rev. Roger Whalen

Diocesan Executive Officer, Registrar & Secretary-Treasurer of Synod

The Venerable Charlene Taylor

Archdeacon of Labrador

The Venerable Julie Brace

Archdeacon of Trinity-Conception-Placentia

The Venerable Christine Lynch

Archdeacon of Avalon

The Venerable Nancy March

I am also appointing the following to the **Bishop's Council 2026-2029**, which is an advisory group to assist me in Episcopal ministry:

Bishop's Advisor for Institutional Chaplaincy & Diocesan Pastoral Care

The Venerable Wayne Parsons

Bishop's Advisor for Community Outreach

The Venerable Fred Marshall

Bishop's Advisor for Liturgy & Diocesan Worship

The Venerable Christopher Fowler

Bishop's Advisor for Vocational Ministry, Chair of Postulancy Committee & Examining Chaplain

The Venerable Eli Evans

Bishop's Advisor for Spiritual Direction & Faith Development

The Venerable Gerald Westcott

Our **Diocesan Chancellor**, Hilary Wicks, will continue to provide us with essential legal counsel when requested to do so, and to act as assessor in determining questions on points of order at any meeting of the Synod or of the Diocesan Executive.

Please hold all these faithful servants in your prayers as they take up or continue their ministries.

More Good News!

Please mark your calendars for our next **Diocesan Synod**, to be held on **18-19 September 2026**, when we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. This gathering will be our first in-person Diocesan Synod since 2019, and I am excited to be together again! There has been an Anglican presence in Newfoundland and Labrador for over 325 years. While we acknowledge the pains of our colonial past in our relationship with the original peoples of this land, we are committed to moving forward together in truth, respect, and partnership. Our Primate, Archbishop Shane Parker, will be with us for this milestone gathering, which will be both a thankful remembrance of the past and a Spirit-led visioning for the future. Begin now, in your parishes, to pray, to tell the stories, and to listen for what God is saying to us.

We are also honoured to host **General Synod 2028** from **May 7-14, 2028!** This will be the first time that our Diocese has hosted this gathering of Anglicans from across Canada since 1989. In addition to the regular business of General Synod, we will be holding the election and installation of the next Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. Planning is already underway, but we will need your help! We need volunteers to help welcome and host the hundreds of delegates and visitors who will come to our Diocese. If you are available, please reach out to us at Church House.

Another exciting expression of the Marks of Mission and of our Strategic Plan, Set Sail, is the new online **Lay Ministry Program** we have launched in partnership with Queen's College. In line with the second Mark of Mission: *To teach, baptize and nurture new believers*. This free, self-paced, self-directed program makes high-quality theological education and practical ministry training available to any layperson in our Diocese, no matter where they live or serve. Where the Reverend Simon Gibbons once walked hundreds of miles through snow

and storm to bring Christ to the people, today, people can receive formation in faith without leaving their homes. Core modules in Baptism and Discipleship, Scripture, Eucharist, Prayer, and Anglicanism are already available; ministry-specific modules will follow in early 2026. I encourage every parish to consider forming small learning cohorts, and I invite everyone who feels even the slightest stirring toward deeper service to speak with their clergy about enrollment. All details are at <https://anglicanenl.net/lay-ministry-program/>.

I am excited to share another initiative that speaks to our faith and our call to serve those in need within our community: the **Sowing Seeds-Growing Community Farm**. Using Diocesan land, this initiative provides fresh, nutritious vegetables to local food banks and community outreach groups. As part of Set Sail, this program exemplifies our commitment to Engaging Partnerships and the Fifth Mark of Mission: *to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth*. We invite you to play a vital role in addressing food insecurity and fostering food sustainability in our local communities. So far, tens of thousands of plates have been filled with fresh and nutritious produce from our Farm. You helped make this happen! I urge every parish to deepen its involvement in this vital work of stewardship and compassion, whether by volunteering, donating supplies, or expanding similar efforts locally.

Another powerful expression of Set Sail and the Third Mark of Mission: *to respond to human need by loving service*, is our **Mobile Ministry Bus**, launched in late 2024 with the generous donation of a passenger bus from Metrobus. This mobile wellness platform provides compassion to street-involved individuals through integrated services, including coffee and tea, simple hot meals, basic health care, housing support, hygiene products, and clothing. Our mission is to form partnerships with like-minded stakeholders to improve the well-being and quality of life of those in need, fostering a community that respects the dignity of every human being. Our vision is a society where no individual is left behind or overlooked, and where marginalized populations receive the care and support they deserve. I call on every parish in our Diocese to contribute actively - whether by knitting mittens, preparing meals, driving the bus, or supporting operating costs - so that this ministry can reach even further in embodying Christ's mercy across our Diocese.

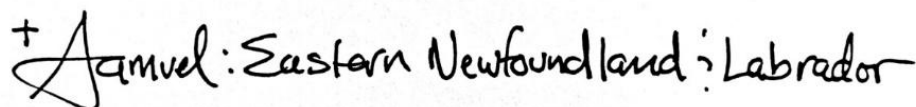
Five years ago, you entrusted me with our **Diocesan Crozier**, which is kept at our Cathedral. It is a heavy and ancient symbol of Episcopal ministry that has been carried by ten bishops of the former Diocese of Newfoundland and our current Diocese since Bishop Llewellyn Jones, who helped rebuild our Cathedral following the Great Fire of 1892. As Bishop Jones wrote in 1904, upon receiving this beautiful symbol: *"From early times, a pastoral staff placed in the hands of a Bishop was part of the ceremony of his consecration and investiture of office. A Bishop without a staff is scarcely ecclesiastically complete. It figures forth to the Bishop the support he may derive from leaning upon his office with faith and prayer, not upon his personal feelings. The earliest pastoral staff was the Bishop's walking stick, on which he leaned in church, as seats were not then provided. It reminds him of the pastoral office of 'the Good Shepherd, who giveth His life for the sheep.'"*



My dear Diocesan family, as your Bishop, I have tried to hold this crozier faithfully, conscious always of my own weakness, yet I know that I never carry it alone. There have been many times when I have leaned on the crozier when I could not bear the weight of this office. You have helped me bear its weight when I could not do so on my own. I know that through your love and support, Christ walks with us, and the Holy Spirit continues to fill our sails as a Diocesan family.

Let us therefore set our faces toward the horizon with renewed confidence – not in our own strength, but in the power of the risen Lord who led us through the pandemic's storm, who leads us still through every rough water we face, and who will bring us safe to the harbour prepared for us. May **Set Sail** continue to be our shared voyage, guided by the **Five Marks of Mission**, until the light of the Gospel and the love of God in Christ Jesus shines brightly throughout this Diocese. As Christmas draws near and the Light of the World breaks once more upon us, may the Child born in Bethlehem fill your homes with hope, your hearts with joy, and your parishes with fresh courage to be bearers of that same Light wherever it is needed most. I remain, with deep affection and constant prayer,

Yours in the service of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel: Eastern Newfoundland: Labrador". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Samuel Rose
Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

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Canonical Mandate Letters

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[Mark 1: Canon for Evangelism and Witness](#)
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