

**Presidential Address**  
**45<sup>th</sup> Provincial Synod**  
**Province of Canada**

**Anglican Church of Canada**  
**Gander NF**  
**September 10, 2009**

**So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. (1Thessalonians 2.8 NRSV)**

Tonight, in this beautiful Cathedral, as God's people, we gather to worship the one true God. The God of creation, the God of our salvation, the God of beauty and wonder who makes holy the work that we are about. What a gift we have received and as Paul says in addressing the infant church in Thessalonika, what a privilege is ours to share, not only the gospel of God but also our own selves. Thank you for the opportunity to address you in the spirit of the Gospel.

On behalf of the Synod membership, I want to express our sincere thanks to Bishop David, Margaret, the Cathedral staff, the many Volunteers and the local arrangement committee. This time of gathering promises to be hard work in fellowship. Saint Paul, as affectionate as he was to that struggling church in Thessalonika, in his second letter, says in 3.10 "If anyone will not work, let him not eat." So we must keep our heads down if we desire to partake of the generous hospitality, that I know is in store for us.

I also want to say thank you! on behalf of all gathered, to our Provincial executive, who since last fall has met several times over the past months to finalize the agenda for this Synod. There was a true spirit of accommodation exercised by the agenda committee to be fair and reasonable given the window of time that was available. Not to mention the budget. Time and treasure are indeed precious.

We pray that our sense of priority is God's priority at this time in the life of God's church in our parishes, dioceses, and beyond. We are a representative body bearing our local concerns, while at the same time, endeavoring to define God's apostolic mission beyond ourselves.

We share this gift, this gift of responsibility, this gift of governance and oversight that can impact the local, regional and national ecclesial scene. We are about important work. But it can leave us with important questions... is our work enabling proclamation?... are people coming to Christ because of our efforts?...are people lives being changed because our work is incarnational? And again, are these the right questions?

We gather as Anglicans with a rich tradition and institutional hierarchical structure of Bishops, Priests, Deacons and Laypersons, as defined by our Constitutions and Canons. These realities of our corporate life to a large extent define who we are and what we are to be about. But we must be vigilant that our structure and governance must serve the mission of God and not the other way round. As leaders in God's church, our meeting in the next few days will call us to be accountable to the task of reflection on many fronts as we set before us God's mission in our several and varied contexts.

There is no way of sugar coating our present reality as a mainline traditional church endeavoring to find its place in an anti-authority, anti-institutional world. We must by God's grace seek a new way, we are called to a new way that embraces change and transformation.

Gary Nelson writes in his recent book *Borderland Churches*, “Change for change’s sake is never helpful. Staying the course is not helpful either especially when all the signs tell us that it is a critical time to make course corrections. Skillful leaders nurture a sense of urgency in their [church]. They foster a passionate desire to see the church live out its intended purpose to sing the song in this new and strange world. This is the critical difference between [churches] that live in their memories and those who live in anticipation of the future.” We might say “God’s mission is about a new and more glorious day than yesterday.”

We all know and understand that change is not easy, we wish it were. We desire to defer the task of change to others, but as Nelson writes, “[We] have choices to make in the change process. Effective leaders wishing transformational change in their [church] must first be transformed ....Cultural change begins with personal change.”

At Synod, early tomorrow morning, we will set the stage for our work of reviewing our governance structures and, on Saturday morning we will have two hours with a panel discussion and everyone will be given opportunity to address challenging questions. It is not yet clear where this work will lead, but it gives opportunity for the collective voice of the Province in helping to define or redefine the purpose of Provincial Synod as an integral part of our Canadian Anglican expression. Given that we are members of our own Diocesan Synods and that General Synod is a representative body, this work is integral to similar work being carried out at both the General and Diocesan Synod levels. I believe that Provincial Synod has a major role to play for many reasons, not the least of which is our distinct Atlantic regional context.

As a Province our statement of purpose is set out under four broad headings. (It is not my intent to read every line as set out, however I want to read the first purpose in its entirety because it sets the stage for the three following statements) **1.** The providing of occasions for fellowship and of a forum for the consideration of topics of particular concern with the Province, including: faith, witness, ministry and liturgical worship; the political, economic, educational and social dimensions of the Ecclesiastical Province; both those common to the whole and those of a more local nature; the relationship of the Church to governments in all matters affecting the quality of life and of community within the ecclesiastical Province. In order to fulfill the above functions, Provincial synod shall call upon speakers and scholars to inform them in seminar and worship on these matters. **2.** The planning and promotion of teamwork among bishops, clergy and laity within the Province. **3.** The exercise of canonical and legislative authority and jurisdiction in all matters affecting the general interests and well being of the Church within the Province. (fourteen matters and directives follow). **4.** ( one final and very important purpose) The supervision of the programme of the Advisory Council for Postulants for Ordination within the Province (ACPO).

Your Provincial House of Bishops met on Wednesday to review our purpose and to continue our support for the mandate of Provincial Synod. But we function under no illusions. In this ever changing and strange new world we inhabit, the Church and its leadership, is experiencing marginalization similar to many individuals in our community and their experience with organized religion. There are many reason for this, our culture, generally speaking, view the institutional church and church leadership, particularly clergy, as irrelevant to their lives and even their faith journey. Fewer people are inclined to see the church as their spiritual home.

Is this bad news, or good news? We can view this as bad news for those who seek increased numbers in the pews, or we can view this new landscape with fresh eyes and a heart filled with imagination willing

to accept the gift and challenge of opportunity for a new day not just for us but for the world.

As Bishops we fully understand that we do not possess the answers that will solve the church's concerns but the collective wisdom of God's spirit working in and through the faithful stands a better chance to make a difference. We are working hard in building a strong collegial fellowship by pooling our gifts and desire to walk with each other. We pray our leadership will model a template for each one gathered.

In the recent history of our Church we have never been better positioned to make a real difference, that is very good news. When God's mission is being done we will regain our relevancy. God's love is a commodity always in demand and we will witness this need as we are sent into God's world in the true Apostolic sense.

Today we commemorate the life and witness of Edmund James Peck (1850-1924)..Anglican missionary to the Inuit on Blacklead Island of the Northeast coast of Baffin Island. At the age of 34 being sponsored by the Church Missionary Society, Mr Peck, accompanied by a Mr. Parker who had some medical training set sail from Scotland on a whaling supply ship to Blacklead Island, a whaling station in the deep North and it would be at least two years before Peck could return to his wife and family. In an article written by the Rev. Arthur Lewis in 1904, there is no mention or hint of colonial expansion, only a deep desire and sacrificial willingness to bring the good news of the Gospel to God's people in a distant land. We get a real sense of the level of commitment from an entry in Peck's journal:

The usual routine, Mr. Peck tells us, was as follows: Rise 6.45 a.m., light fires, prepare breakfast; breakfast 8 a.m., prayers 8.30 a.m.; study of Eskimo language with Mr. Parker from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.; visiting and preparing Eskimo addresses from 10 a.m. to noon. Then came the preparation of dinner. Dinner 1:00 p.m., private reading and study from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., school for children from 3 p.m. to 4.15 p.m., visiting and exercise from 4.15 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., tea 5.30 p.m.; after tea, prepare for evening meeting, which is at 7.30 p.m.; after the meeting, study of the language with Eskimos; family prayer at 10 p.m.; then private reading and devotion till 10.45 p.m. This ended the day and bed had been earned.

As early as October 3, Mr. Peck writes in his diary: "Two Eskimos are busy making the frame of a tent, which we hope to have ready by Sunday"; and two days later we hear of its progress, and of the great interest which the men are taking in its construction. This true tabernacle of witness to the presence of God in Cumberland Sound was ready in time, and when Sunday, October 7, was over, we read that it had been "a very happy but wearing day.

Edmund Peck a stranger in a strange land both manifesting and witnessing God's love to God's honor and glory.

We have been summoned into God's tent in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Lets not kid ourselves, we are a diverse group of Anglicans gathered from diverse contexts inhabiting an ever changing cultural landscape that is overwhelming in this postmodern world. Yet, I trust we see ourselves as the people of God not totally equipped for the journey but united in mission. We might be limited by our humanity, yet trusting on the mission heart of God to guide us on our pilgrimage to seek and to make real God's love for the world. Underlying Saint Paul's encouragement to the early church is a desire for the believer to engage this Gospel imperative.

General Synod's 2019 Vision for our church presents such an opportunity. Our engagement began as a Church in 1893 at the time Edmund Peck came to Blacklead Island. Our reason for being at that time, as Dioceses, was to join together in a common mission, to participate in Jesus' proclamation of "God's kingdom, on earth." That common mission continues with us. The widely accepted Five Marks Of Mission of our Anglican Communion is a wonderful guide to our work ahead:

1. To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

How might we structure ourselves to make effectively engage this challenge and opportunity?

The General Synod's website for Vision 2019 provides the opportunity to share our stories of our response to God's mission and an opportunity for us to respond to the question: "Where is your church now, and where do you want the Anglican Church of Canada to be in 2019?" It truly is a question for all of us.

God so loved the world that he gave his Son... As the Body of Christ, we offer up the work of this synod to God's mission, namely: the work of our parishes, our dioceses, our General Synod, and the work of mandated committees on Provincial and General Synod governance, safe churches, inter faith, Primacy Task Force, Council of the North; we offer up our decision making and elections; all to God's glory

We are grateful for the presence of our guests, you will add an important dimension to our discussion and work Thank you for being here. While attending the installation of the new Bishop of Quebec, Dennis Drainville, a number of our Provincial Bishops attended a farewell reception for Archbishop Bruce on the occasion of his retirement. I'm grateful for his leadership and counsel to this Province, our Synod, Council and Executive and to me personally, over the past 6 years I'm also grateful for the work of our Chancellor Charles Ferris and the Provincial Executive who have worked tirelessly on your behalf during this interim period. Pray for our elections on Saturday for the new Metropolitan and Provincial Executive. Again on Saturday we look forward to welcoming our Primate, Fred and his greeting and his message Sunday at our closing Eucharist. Finally, We thank God for the diocese of Central Newfoundland and their generous hospitality.

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AMEN

