

have recommended. We pray that God will equip our Communion to be equal to the task and challenges which lie before it.”

Our diocese will continue as full members of the world-wide Anglican Communion and prayerfully respond to each development in keeping with the constitution of our Church.

Communications

The visioning synods of 2000 and 2001 stressed the need for improved communication throughout the diocese, particularly in the area electronic communication. We are thankful for the volunteer efforts that allows us visibility on the web and e-mail communication. This has demonstrated that there are many more benefits to be had from this medium of communication. To realize these benefits we must be intentional, beginning with a proper needs assessment. The budget for 2004 will reflect our ongoing response to better communicate with Rectors, Diocesan Leadership, Parishes and our diocesan youth. We are most proud of our award winning NB Anglican and we are happy to report that there is cooperative efforts ongoing between the NB Anglican Board and the Electronic Communications Team.

Conclusion

Prior to our Lord’s death on the Cross, He prayed. His prayer recognized that His work on earth was finished. It took roughly three years to develop a band of faithful followers commissioned to continue His work so that all might be one, and come to the knowledge of God’s love in a very real way. It was an incredible step in faith to believe that the infant Church could survive against such odds. But we should not be surprised that it did. After all it is God’s creation completed by Jesus’ death on the Cross. God responding in love to His people, a people so in need of compassion, care, repentance and restoration. Our question as we enter into the business of this Synod is this: As a result of our work, our prayer, our planning, and our actions, will we and the church we represent more fully understand the depth of God’s love by our efforts? God has taken the initiative to redeem his world, our response is required, a response that calls each one of us to assume an attitude of prayer and repentance, these are the first steps to God’s kingdom and eternal life.

Bishop Miller’s Charge to the 127th Synod of the Diocese of Fredericton



Introduction

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Friends,

To quote our Diocesan Profile “There is a renewed sense of unity and purpose in our Diocese, primarily as the result of the Bishop’s [Hockin’s] charges to the 2000 and 2001 synods.” These synods began a process of reflection, re-evaluation and priority setting for the ministry we share in our diocese.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church describes *The Bishop’s Charge* “as an address at a visitation of the clergy under his jurisdiction. A charge is usually more of the nature of a admonitory exhortation than a definite command, though the latter could quite properly be conveyed through a charge.” By tradition, our definition has been somewhat expanded to include a Bishop’s address to the Diocesan Synod under his jurisdiction. I’ll let you be the judge as to admonitions and commands.

During the process leading up to our two most recent visioning synods, I believe that God the Holy Spirit, did in fact admonish, command, and direct His church in this place to set priorities that would reflect our Lord’s *Great Commission* given to His church on earth as recorded in Matthew 28.

Our mandate to go forth to all the world, and to make disciples of all people, is a command of our Lord and Saviour that is wrapped in a message of hope. Our ministry is to be as Jesus’ own ministry, *‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord... Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and die and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations beginning with Jerusalem.’*

Residential Schools

The issue of Residential School Settlement is in the first year of a five year plan to raise 25 million dollars which is the Anglican Church's contribution to the Settlement Fund. The Fund is being administered by the Federal Government. To date 7 million dollars is in the fund. Our diocese has paid to date \$254,000 of a \$762,000 commitment. It is hoped that through the ADR process that all cases will be settled within seven years. We all understand that this commitment has an affect on the other ministry priorities that we have defined. However, we are challenged to manage our ministry priorities, once again, in light of financial concerns.

Blessing of Same Sex Unions

The debate surrounding the blessing of same-sex unions and homosexuality in general in the Anglican Church of Canada continues to dominate the landscape. As Bishop of the Diocese of Fredericton I want to ask for your prayers through listening hearts as together we struggle with this major biblical/doctrinal and pastoral concern for God's people.

I have just returned from the House of Bishops Meeting in Toronto this past week. Much time was taken to debate this issue. The House of Bishops continues to reaffirm the position taken in the Fall of 2002, and the 1997 Guidelines on Human Sexuality. These guidelines require that no individual decisions will be made in any additional dioceses before General Synod in 2004. In the Fall of 2002 the bishops agreed that they refer the matter to General Synod "for discussion and, if possible, resolution." The statement also said that until the matter is resolved, "all bishops are asked to uphold the 1997 guidelines of the house of bishops on human sexuality." The guidelines state that bishops "do not accept the blessing of homosexual unions."

As the Bishop of the Diocese, and an agent of unity in the Church, I will continue to uphold and to be in concert with this understanding and agreement.

The House of Bishops, also see the need for continuing dialogue and pastoral care, "That in response to the "Statement by the Primates of the

So, How are we doing?

Youth Ministry

This year, 2003 was declared "*The Year of the Youth.*" A 14 point Youth Action Plan was created and in response a new *Diocesan Youth Director* has been appointed to take up duties as at November 1, 2003. The Rev. Dr. George Porter will lead this action plan. The process leading to Dr. Porters appointment has taken two years of intensive planning under the leadership of Peter Irish. I am grateful for this work and now appeal to the Clergy and the Parishes to uphold George in this ministry by working closely with him, his support team, and the youth of each congregation to create a new spiritually focused, youth friendly environment in our churches. Our children must know that we take their spiritual development seriously.

The Rev. Pat Drummond our (part-time) *Christian Education Director* continues in this ministry with a focus to increase the importance and visibility of Christian Education programs for our children, and to train those who teach and those who lead. I thank Pat on your behalf and know that this ministry has made a significant difference in our diocese.

Under Bishop Hockin's guidance *New Guidelines* have been developed for clergy to help prepare candidates for Confirmation and are in place..

The *Bishop's Dinner* this year was focused on youth and the proceeds from that event will be used for development of youth initiatives. At the request of *Camp Medley*, I met recently with a professional fund raising company who have been given the mandate to study the feasibility of raising \$1,250,000.00 for the renewal of the Camp. The vision of the camp is to improve it so that it will have wide diocesan appeal, while maintaining the integrity of summer camp for our youth. A renewed facility will provide a gathering place for other ministries both on a parish and diocesan scale. It is agreed that the camp is in urgent need of redevelopment. Part of the funding will come from the Bishop's dinner in the Fall of 2004. If a campaign is to be launched it will include capital funds for *Camp Brookwood*. You will be hearing more details on this initiative soon. I know you agree that our diocesan camps are our most effective youth outreach ministries.

community - a community now concerned with ministry instead of maintenance. New facilities are then planned to facilitate the ministry vision. This redefinition is a major pastoral work and takes time and a heightened level of commitment both by the new parish and the diocese. These realignment initiatives cannot happen without the diocese partnering with the new parish. To this end I will be seeking direction from our Board of Finance as to how parishes can benefit from a strategic interim and long term financing plan for new construction projects.

The Archdeaconry Commissions, chaired by the Archdeacons will continue their work in advising the Bishop as to how other concerned parishes might address their ministry needs. This may result in further amalgamations, partnering and shared ministry with adjoining parishes. Addressing these concerns are critical in some cases as some parishes have reported that their future is in real jeopardy. I would encourage the Diocesan Council, working with the Archdeacons, to develop a ministry strategy for the future of our diocese. Synod 2001's recommendation was that the "Diocese establish standards to determine the viability of a parish – a kind of liability – viability analysis tool." Is there a better way to meet the needs and more effectively proclaim the Gospel.

The sharing of our successes and failures should be a resource of support and learning and we need to continue to be open about identifying parishes that we consider to be "struggling."

Parishes need to be willing to accept the challenge of reassessing themselves, starting with the question Why are we here? What is God calling us to be and become? What is our ministry in the context of our community and the wider church?

If the parishes are "the engine of Christian mission" they must be strong and healthy in order to meet the pastoral needs of the community they serve, to be formative in matters of faith, and to seek out opportunities for bringing others to Christ. This cannot happen if our energies and resources are for building and clergy maintenance only. The role of the Bishop and the Diocesan Council/Synod Office Staff is to provide leadership, evaluation, coordination and support.

supported and encouraged to partner with the diocese in this critical area of training for the newly ordained.

The establishment of a new *Diocesan Resource Centre* in 2002 is a diocesan sponsored ministry that has given parishes and individuals resources that enable more effective programming and training at the parish level. We are grateful to Pat Drummond and the Anglican House staff and Summer Student for this good work.

Other ongoing and new initiatives in spiritual formation and development include:

A *Diocesan Men's Conference* designed to encourage personal spiritual growth (we should note: that a number of women from throughout the diocese annually attend a similar conference, which is sponsored by the Christ Church Cathedral ACW).

A new *Definitely Not Synod* lay leadership weekend, and a *Wardens Development Day* have made significant contributions to the strengthening of lay leadership at the parish level. Wardens have found that the new handbook for parish officers has been a welcomed resource in assisting their leadership role.

I have asked Bishop Hockin if he would continue the *Video-Taped Lenten Bible* study program for 2004, a resource for bible study at the parish level, and he has agreed. We thank him for graciously sharing this gift.

In 2004 the diocese intends to respond to a renewed focus on layreader training. It is hoped that there will be opportunity for all lay readers to spend a day with the Bishop, plus, one major training event per year. Our diocese is greatly indebted to all our lay readers for their dedicated service at the parish level. Several services are led by both parochial and diocesan lay readers each Sunday.

Our diocese must continue to support spiritual formation initiatives at the parish and diocesan level: The Alpha Program has been a great resource at the parish level and has also been shared in an ecumenical context. Alpha by its name recognizes that it is only a beginning. Many are asking for opportunity to build on this foundational base. Cursillo is one such faith

Our mandate is to be exercised by preaching a Gospel message of hope to a world that continues to separate itself from our loving God. If Jesus' words are true, our priorities as a diocese must reflect the gospel command. How are we doing? Is our focus on Christ's ministry?

PRIORITIES

The synods of 2000 and 2001 set four (4) ministry priorities in our diocese.

Youth Ministry

Education and Development of Our Clergy and Lay Leaders

Stewardship and Financial Development

Strengthening Struggling Parishes

These four areas of priority have offered both a great challenge and a great opportunity. We have discovered that in order to develop a reasonable response to the needs in these four areas, enormous amounts of energy and resources are required. We want to give thanks to those who have contributed so much to this development process thus far. However, notice must be given that sustaining new developments will require new strategies management and administration.

In meeting with a number of parishes recently I shared with them some statistics, and then I posed a question. Statistics Canada report that there are approximately 70,000 Anglicans in the Diocese of Fredericton; our Diocesan records show that approximately 30,000 are registered on our parish lists; and, that approximately 9000 Anglicans attend church on a regular Sunday. Now the question, it may sound a little ridiculous, but here goes "What if all 70,000 showed up on Sunday morning?" What would you do...what would we do? With God all things are possible. Looking at it another way, perhaps God knows what He is doing. Perhaps he knows and understands our capability. But our Lord's command stands. God desires that all people should know Him in the context of His body, the church of His Son Jesus Christ. Our mandate is not maintenance, our mandate is mission - to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the whole world. Over the past four years we have exercised a deliberate attempt to be responsible in addressing our renewed vision, while at the same time responding to a number of wider issues in the church.

Anglican Communion" (October 16, 2003) the Primate be asked to establish a task force of the House of Bishops to draw up terms and conditions for "adequate Episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities" in the Anglican Church of Canada, to consult through the Primate "with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates," and to report to the April 2004 meeting of the House of Bishops."

On the issue of marriage and same sex blessings, I would strongly recommend that a motion from this Synod, such as the following would be helpful in restating the position of this diocese.

That this Diocesan Synod affirms and upholds the teaching of the Church (1) that marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others and (2) that no clergy person may bless any union or marriage of persons of the same sex, As a diocese we accept the report on human sexuality as agreed to by the Lambeth Conference of 1998: "to listen to the experience of homosexual persons, and ...to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful person, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ."

I would support this Synod's action to memorialize a motion expressing this position and direct the Secretary of Synod to forward the same to the meeting of the General Synod in 2004.

I intend to form a Bishop's representative task force to study the issue of human sexuality as it pertains to the issue presently before the Anglican Church of Canada. The task force would report back to the Bishop before General Synod 2004. This issue, while debated in the context of the Church's tradition and Scriptural teaching, must fairly consider the present pastoral reality around and within us.

The Primates concluded their statement with these words "It is clear that recent controversies have opened debates within the life of our Communion which will not be resolved until there has been a lengthy process of prayer, reflection and substantial work in and alongside the Commission which we

Youth ministry, Christian education and the development of the resources needed cannot be done in a vacuum. Each must share the baptismal commitment to nurture our youth on their faith journey.

Education and Development of Our Clergy and Lay Leaders

Spiritual formation, education and development that enables each one of us to take our part in proclamation takes many forms, and plays a significant foundational role if our overall vision is to be realized. From Synod 2001, *“The [Synod] believed that Lay Education and Spiritual Growth are the most important issues facing the Church and undergird everything we do. We cannot disciple our youth, for example, without adult members receiving training and resources. We need a full range of programs that encompass all church members. Outreach was not specifically mentioned in the charge, but it was felt this would be a consequence of spiritual growth. This also relates to the whole question of motivating persons to be involved in education for spiritual growth.”*

Planning is in place for the continuance of the highly successful annual *Clergy College*. Funding in the past was made possible by the Bishop’s Dinner, however these funds have been expended and new sources of funding will have to be identified. The annual Clergy conference at RNS in late August 2004 will have as its main focus clergy self-care. I am currently seeking facilitators for this event. Bishop Hiltz (NS and PEI) and I have been working together to see how we might cooperate in the area of Clergy Development. Given the proximity of our dioceses cooperation should demonstrate improved stewardship at many levels.

We have been able to double our financial support for our *Divinity Students*. While our support is significant, increasing costs for undergrad and graduate studies is a factor in considering a call to ministry. Repayment of education costs is a great burden on the newly ordained. Developing a strategy for financial support is a priority.

The *Vocational Chaplains* have been of great assistance in the discernment process for possible candidates to ordained ministry and have sponsored *Post Ordination Training*. I am grateful for their ministry, however supervised training in curacy settings is required. Parishes must be

Work of the Constitution and Canons Committee

I am grateful for the work of the Constitution and Canons Committee having completed the work of a revised Church of England Act and the redrafting of our Constitution and Canons. The redraft of the Constitution and Canons are before us at this Synod. The Diocesan Council has directed this work so that our Constitution and Canons might more readily reflect our present ministry vision. The passing of this revised document requires three quarters majority in the house of clergy and the house of laity. You have been given notice of motion to defer passing these revisions until the Synod of 2005. If this motion is passed three other documents that flow directly from the canons, will have to be delayed: Diocesan Policies, Diocesan Guidelines and Diocesan Directives. These documents provide the practical application of the intent of the Act, Constitution, and Canons. The present policies, guidelines and directives are dated and require redrafting immediately following the passing of the Constitution and Canons so that these tools will be available to enable our vision of ministry. I would recommend that this synod accept the revisions as offered and if required bring revisions to the synod of 2005. This would demonstrate more effective stewardship of time and resources and enable the Bishop and Council to move forward.

Summary and Challenge

When you return to your home you should commend your respective parishes for a job well done. But there is much more to do. During the last four years, in addition to responding to the synods of 2000 and 2001, we have been challenged by issues related to the wider church: The issues of our Marriage Canon, Residential Schools, the Blessing of Same Sex Unions and our desire to more effectively communicate with each other.

Marriage Canon

Amendments to the General Synod Canon on Marriage will be given second reading at the 2004 General Synod. The amendments propose to disband the Diocesan Matrimonial Commissions. It is my intent to continue this process under Diocesan Guidelines as developed with the help of the Dean and Archdeacons. I consider this process as a major pastoral tool, particularly in the re-marriage of divorced persons. Further, I intend to seek counsel on behalf of the diocese from the present Matrimonial Commission, Dean, Archdeacons and others as required to review the aforementioned amendments and report to the Bishop prior to General Synod in 2004.

sharing program that can continue the formation process. The diocesan faith formation program must be ordered in such a way as to respond to the needs of those desiring a more intimate walk with God through Jesus Christ.

In response to our synods challenging us to be more intentional in faith formation, a new initiative has been undertaken in the area of intentional spiritual growth. *The Companioned Spiritual Formation Team* will offer opportunities for spiritual growth through training and participation in individual and corporate retreats focused in the areas of spiritual direction, companionship, and mentoring. These opportunities will be presented regionally and diocesan wide with a view to encouraging groups and individuals to seek out companionship on their spiritual journey.

It is hoped through an enhanced *Communication Network*, the ministry of faith formation can be coordinated more effectively throughout the diocese. The newly formed Companioned Spiritual Formation Team sees their ministry as largely communicative in nature by encouraging and enabling spiritual formation at a multitude of levels.

Stewardship and Financial Development

In matters of *Stewardship and Financial Development* our diocese has been proactive by supporting the work of the Stewardship Education and Action Team. Three annual conferences have been held with a high degree of response. A parish program for the development of parish ministry and stewardship has been offered and presented to many parishes throughout the diocese by the team. Many of the parishes who have taken part in these conferences and workshops have returned to their parishes understanding the importance of good stewardship at it pertains to effective ministry. The synod of 2000 was asked to consider creating a diocesan stewardship development officer position. This was not given a “green light” at that time. It may have been premature, however given the scope of our vision and how it has been developing we have outgrown what can be reasonable expected from a volunteer team. Again, education, development and communication must continue to be priority in this regard. I would encourage this Synod to direct our Diocesan Council to develop a strategic plan that addresses more intentionally the financial requirements for our vision and the merits of a *Financial Development Officer* for this necessary work.

Financial support for the work of the diocese comes largely from the parishes through the mission assessment portion of our diocesan budget. Expectations have been raised to new heights through consultation and encouragement to participate in the wider vision. It is hoped that our diocese can develop more fully the recommended narrative budgeting process. Narrative budgeting is a financial template that tells the story of how God is doing his redemptive work in our midst. This narrative template is an accountability and evaluation tool that will reflect good or poor stewardship practices of the diocese and similarly could be instituted at the parish level.

If our vision is to be realized then it must be a collective effort. In Acts 2:44 we read “All the believers were together and had everything in common...and the Lord added to their number daily” And in Acts 4:32, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had.” We are warned of what befalls us if we fail in this regard. How do we apply this stewardship lesson in our context?

Strengthening Struggling Parishes

I recognize the continuing issue of *Struggling Parishes* and the prayer, reflection and consultation required to seriously address this ongoing concern. I quote from the response to the Bishop’s charge of Synod 2001: “There is a sense that parishes need to understand the value and importance of sacrifice, to think beyond themselves and to take the risks required for change.

Fear often accompanies risk, but there is much to be gained by working through our fear. During times of change and uncertainty, education and information is crucial. Part of this education is becoming aware of other struggles within parishes, and of the reality that "united we stand, divided we fall."

In response to Synod 2001 *Archdeaconry Commissions* were formed to study the concerns at the parish level with respect to their future viability. These findings were shared with the Bishop. In one case a process of reflection began that eventually led to the formation of a new parish by the amalgamation of four parishes in the Lower Saint John River Valley. A major part of that work evolved as a redefining of what it means to be