

EPIPHANIES

FROM THE ANGLICAN JOURNAL

Planning and Change



“The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.”

—Proverbs 16:9



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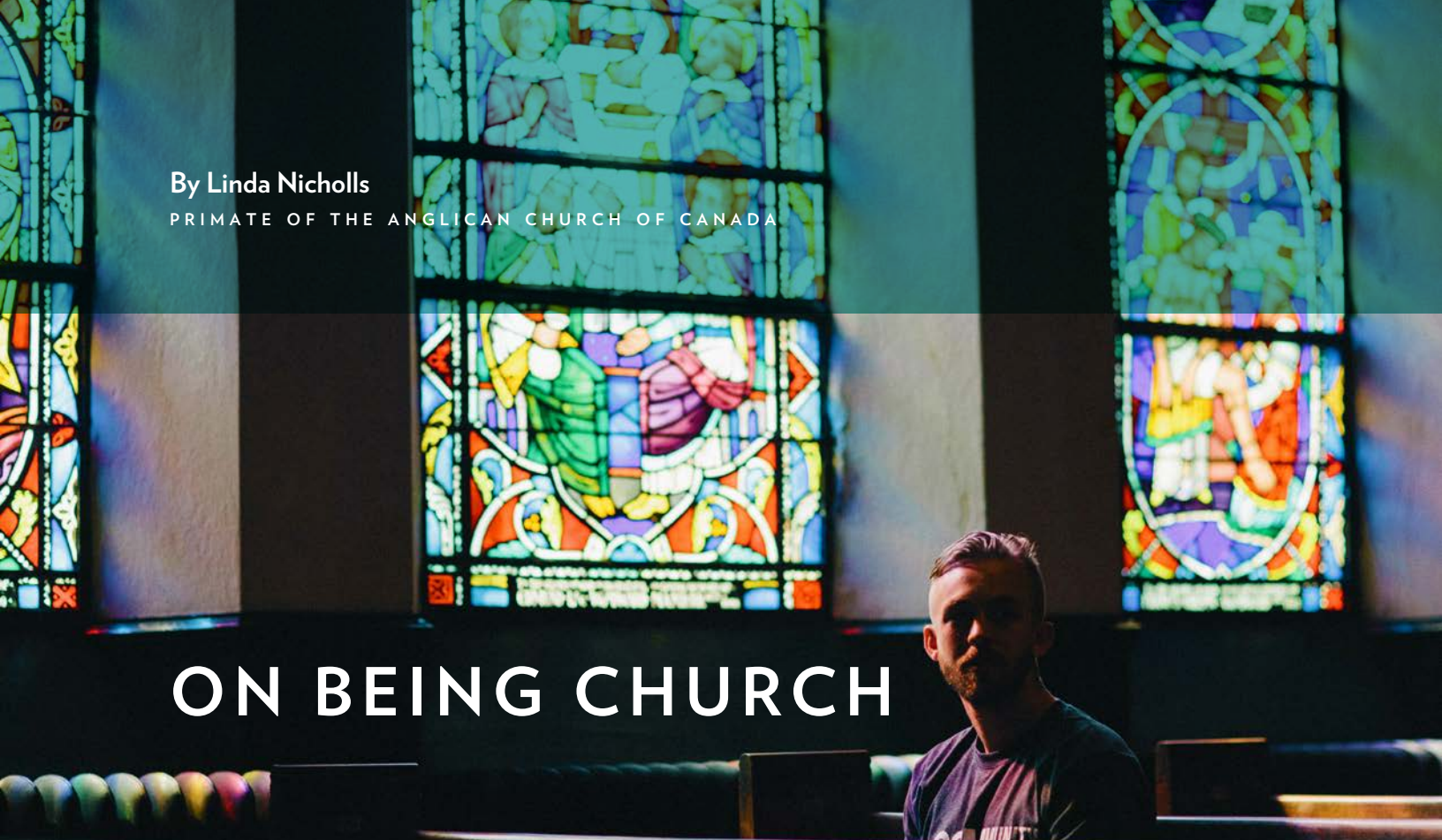
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SUMMER 2020

A photograph of a man with short brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt, sitting in a church pew. He is looking towards the camera. Behind him are large, colorful stained glass windows depicting various religious scenes. The lighting is soft, coming from the windows.

By Linda Nicholls

PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

ON BEING CHURCH

Based on an address to the Council of General Synod

PHOTO: KARL FREDRICKSON/UNSPLASH

For many reasons, including the changes brought about by the pandemic, I have found myself reflecting on what it means to “be church”—and in particular, what it means to be the Anglican Church of Canada. We are a diverse collection of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences: Indigenous people, descendants of early settlers, and relative newcomers. We are dispersed in a wide array of settings and circumstances: urban, suburban, rural and isolated—from coast to coast to coast. What are the assumptions, principles and values that we share, and are prepared to commit to together, as we face what will be a different future?

Around us we see many models of “being church.” Some churches are completely independent congregations, where decisions are made for that particular gathered community by that community alone. Others belong to denominations where key decisions are made centrally and apply to everyone

around the world. Still others are in between, with some commitments made locally and others requiring broader consultation.

I suspect that Jesus would be surprised by what we have created as “the church” from his teachings! There is much about church life that finds its roots in the gatherings of the synagogue, or the civil structures of Roman life, or the political realities of the early Christian communities, or subsequent schisms—and only tangentially in the gospel.

There can be many ways to live out the core principles of the faith in community. The study of these things is called “ecclesiology.” Of course, we believe that our particular form of “being church” is the best for us, though we have made changes over time. We do need to know and understand those things that are particularly Anglican, the basic principles that undergird and shape our common life. They are worth naming, and



Jesus taught the disciples (and by extension all of us through the scriptures) what kind of community he expects. We are a community...where no one is more important than another.

PHOTO: SAMUEL MARTINS/UNSPLASH

committing ourselves to, so that the life we envisage for our Anglican Church of Canada is rooted there first, and so that our decisions for the future will reflect our beliefs.

The church is first and foremost the people of God: a people who gather for worship, prayer, mutual care, education and fellowship, all in preparation for being sent out into the world.

Jesus taught the disciples (and by extension all of us through the scriptures) what kind of community he expects. We are a community:

- where no one is more important than another ("Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all," Mark 9:35);
- where each member loves one another as Jesus loves us ("This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you," John 15:12);
- that is called to unity ("so that they may be one, as [Jesus and his Father] are one," John 17:11).

St. Paul exhorted the early church to be:

- a place where all are equal ("There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus," Galatians 3:28).

St. Peter likewise reminded early Christians that:

- our primary call is to serve one another ("Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received," 1 Peter 4:10).

In such a community:

- sharing resources for the common good of all is expected ("All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need," Acts 2:44-45).

St. Paul also gives us repeatedly, in his letters, a powerful central image of the church as the body of Christ with Jesus as its head, and each of us as members—not just in an organizational sense, but a visceral one:

- "So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." (Romans 12:5)

This joint membership with one another and with Christ is experienced, first and foremost, when we gather around the common table:

- "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:17)

St. Paul has crystal-clear insight into the practical implications of these convictions for the church:

- "Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:15-16)

This is much more than a compelling metaphor—though it is that! Perhaps its most extensive working out in scripture comes in the 12th chapter of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. Here we read of unity through diversity, of interdependence, of the elimination of distinctions between strong and weak, inferior and superior. In such a body, we acknowledge each member's gifts, and our mutual need of them all.

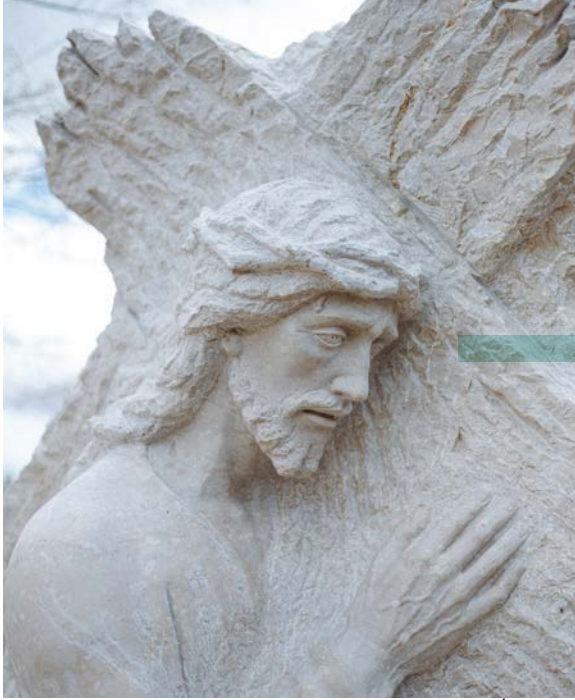


PHOTO: WESLEY TINGE/UNSPLASH



If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

(1 Corinthians 12:26-27)

We each have distinctive roles to play, but we all share a common commitment. “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26-27)

As the “body of Christ”—the church—spread across the Middle East in differing ways, it was assumed that its members were still one, caring for one another in different parts of the world, as demonstrated in the collection for the church in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8:3-5). They discerned together for the sake of the whole as in Acts 15, when the challenge of welcoming Gentiles into this new community of Jews required a council to discern and recognize the work of the Spirit in their midst.

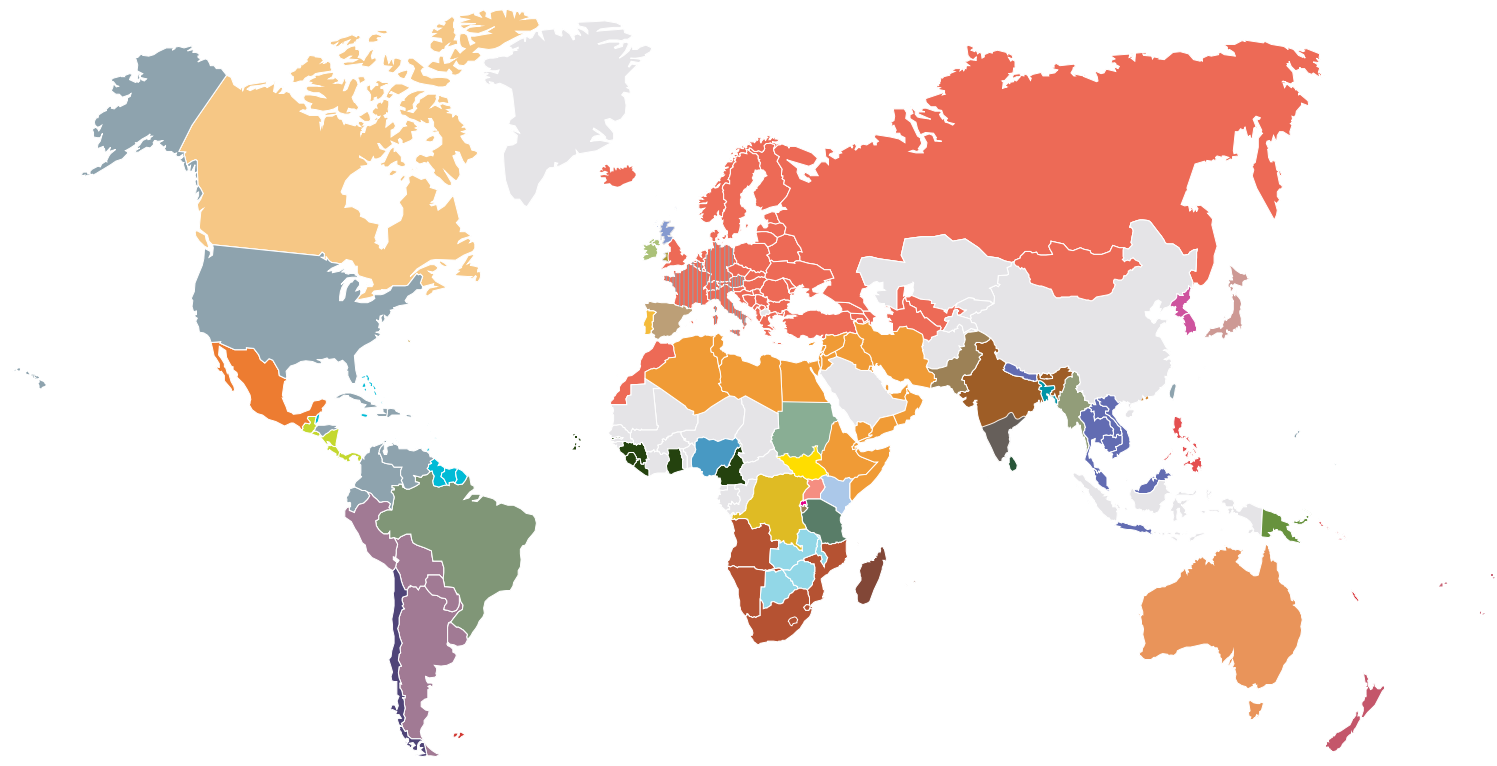
There was a dynamic relationship between the local Christian community and the wider family of God, as it grew and needed diverse leadership.

- Deacons emerged to offer service to those in need and keep the community informed of those needs; (Acts 6)
- priests emerged for sacramental ministry as episcopal ministry (the ministry of oversight by bishops) could not meet all sacramental needs;
- and ultimately bishops linked the local communities

to the wider church as the church spread and grew—to preserve faith, unity and order, and to be the visible symbol of continuity between past, present and future through the laying on of hands.

We express this unity and connectedness succinctly in the Nicene Creed when we declare our belief in “one, holy, catholic [meaning universal] and apostolic Church.”

As Anglicans, we followed our ancestry in the Roman Catholic church through formal structures that help us to maintain continuity, but with a reformed understanding of the synodical place of laity, clergy and bishops discerning together. We established dioceses in a geographic area for the sake of ministry as needed in local places led by a bishop. Over the years diocesan boundaries and configurations change to meet the needs of the church geographically and culturally. In the last decade, the diocese of Keewatin became the new Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh and the Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior became the Territory of the People. Ecclesiastical provinces coordinate ministry for a number of dioceses together. We have four ecclesiastical provinces in the Anglican Church of Canada: British Columbia and Yukon, Rupert's



ANGLICAN COMMUNION MAP COURTESY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COLOURS INDICATE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUPINGS

Land, Ontario and Canada. We then connect with the wider community of other churches and in the worldwide Anglican Communion as the national province of Canada.

We are an international family of juridically independent but recognizably connected churches, in which each part assists the other, and which together share a common liturgical heritage and commitment to essential elements: ordered ministry, episcopal leadership, the creeds (Apostles' and Nicene), and the two primary sacraments: baptism and Eucharist.

There are important lessons for our church today in the scriptural foundations and the historical evolution that I have sketched here.

Anglican structures have sought to honour unity and context. We are one family in the Anglican Church of Canada. By history and mutual commitment to the See of Canterbury we are linked with other Anglican families around the world in the Anglican Communion. Within Canada, we make decisions together for the sake of the whole. That is not easy when our contexts differ so widely: rural and urban, isolated north and densely populated south, wealthy and not, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. But as Scripture reminds us, we are called to care about

all parts of our family, to help one another and to make decisions together. Our primary purpose is not our own good, not even the survival of the Anglican Church, but our witnessing to the Good News—the gospel of Jesus Christ—by building communities of faith where that gospel may be seen and heard.

This requires deep listening to one another and a willingness to share. As a national church, we have committed to sharing resources: local parish to diocese, diocese to internal province and to the national church, and the national church in turn sharing through ministries both globally and locally—including redistribution of funds to support parts of the church here in Canada that need assistance, through the Council of the North and Indigenous ministries, for example. There is a circle of relationship in that sharing based on our commitment to one another: local-provincial-national and back to local.

All this is a tangible expression of St. Paul's call for the stronger and larger to help the smaller and weaker—not paternalistically, but as family with the same goals in the gospel, and with accountability one to the other. That is why a portion of resources from the parish goes to the diocese, and a portion of that comes to the national



PHOTO: SHANE ROUNCE/UNSPLASH



- **We are one in Christ, siblings under God.**
- **We are a body of differing parts needing each other—especially as we walk together with the emerging Indigenous church.**
- **We are accountable to each other and committed to each other.**

General Synod, and a portion of that in turn is shared with the Anglican Communion. In each case, those resources serve the local level through programs, information, grants and connections.

When we hit hard times, or the kinds of extraordinary challenges we are currently facing, there can sometimes be a temptation to guard our precious and threatened resources, to keep them for ourselves and our own. But for the Christian community, it is precisely at such times when we are called to share our joys and sorrows, and discover together that we are stronger in partnership, when we choose together how we will face the challenges. That demands transparency and honest, direct, respectful conversations, which we know may not always be easy. To do this well requires trust and hard work: trust that loving our neighbour as ourselves is at the heart of our relationship; trust that each member is committed equally to the good of their local expression of the church, and the good of the whole expression of our church, collectively; and hard work, to make those things a daily reality.

We in the Anglican Church of Canada are entering a time of transformation. We are discerning our future mission, resetting our priorities and our strategies for

achieving them, examining our governance structures, evaluating our resource requirements and opportunities, finding ways to support the emerging self-determining Indigenous church, and so much else. We do all this as a church committed to being the Body of Christ, locally, regionally, nationally and globally, as Anglicans, and in partnership with other churches, including those with whom we are in full communion. Through the pandemic we have discovered that we are resilient, creative and capable of change far more than we had thought.

I pray that as we move through this period of discernment, we will keep a core understanding of what it means to “be church” at the heart of our choices. For me, that understanding is rooted in Scripture and history.

- We are one in Christ, siblings under God.
- We are a body of differing parts needing each other—especially as we walk together with the emerging Indigenous church.
- We are accountable to each other and committed to each other. Our motto might well be that of the Three Musketeers: “All for one and one for all.”

My friends in the Body of Christ, with God’s help, may this be so for us in our time and place. ■

By Mark MacDonald

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP

JESUS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

—Matthew 7:24–27

This is probably Jesus's most direct comment on strategic planning. Though it is not the only one, this teaching is the reliable guide to directions that follow. These verses are meant to anchor, frame, and guide the process of strategic planning. They show that Jesus believed his teachings to be foundational to all livable and human futures.

PHOTO: KAL VISUALS/UNSPLASH

In our age, we are likely to think this either a bit too bold or a bit too backward—perhaps both—for the choices that are made towards our best possible future. We are, like most modern people, guided by a commitment to efficiency in our structures. In this, we draw deep from the wells of the social sciences, the principles of corporate business structure, and models of governance that have integrity with the predominant political systems that govern the larger society. Referring to these is not bad in advising our best possible choices about the future, but Jesus says that all human planning must bend a knee to the commitments, values, and ideals of the World that he promises is coming.

In Luke 10:1-12, we can see that our approach to the world—its future, and our future—is a way of acting and being that is absolutely shaped by the proclamation of the World that Jesus promises. In his resurrection and Eucharist, he demonstrates and makes living and present God's future. Because we are often dense to the implications here, he makes it clear: love, generosity, compassion for the marginalized, especially the poor, and a primary and active devotion—above all else—to the God who saves us and, thereby, gives us a first taste of the reality that is, even now, coming upon us.

To our regret and to the pain of others, our planning on church placement and survival has often been

strategic with respect to financial considerations, based on the lifestyle preferences and comfort of our primary ethnic constituencies. At the same time, our planning has, overall, not been strategic when it comes to the safety, well-being and pastoral needs of the people at the margins. Often, as St. Bernard said, “The food of the poor is taken to feed the eyes of the rich.”

This is not to say that all the structures of our life together—our buildings, our leadership, our congregations—are defective. It is absolutely certain that they do in some measure today, and will possibly in a great measure in the future, clearly demonstrate the vibrant presence of the World to Come in our common life with humanity and creation. This has great relevance to those who have deep human need, at the margins, and certainly within our congregations.

Indigenous elders have advised us that our spirituality is to be our governance. This has multiple connotations, all of them important and relevant. At a minimum, however, it means that our spirituality is our strategic planning. Our way of life, by and in Jesus, through Word and Spirit—yes, informed by other disciplines and ideas, always making the gospel living and real in the disciplines and ideas that help us along the way—is the birthplace of a strategic planning that embodies and hastens the World to Come. ■

By Tali Folkins
STAFF WRITER

‘A TRIENNIUM OF TRANSITIONS’



IMAGE: UNITED-NATIONS-COVID-19-RESPONSE

PANDEMIC PULLS CHURCH AWAY FROM CONVENTIONAL PLANNING

The extreme unpredictability brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has meant a radical re-thinking of the Anglican Church of Canada's strategic planning process, members of the working group tasked with developing a new plan for the church say.

The strategic planning working group was formed last fall to put together a plan to replace Vision 2019, the document that guided the church from 2010 to 2019. But the group has decided to shift away from the methodology that guided its work until this spring in favour of a more open-ended approach, says its chair, Judith Moses.

"The methodology was designed with a traditional strategic planning process in mind, where you scan your environment, you try to respond to that and plan for that, you identify potential risks to success and you sort those through," she says. "No one predicted a pandemic. A pandemic does not fall in the course of a normal strategic planning process.... So we essentially had to set aside the entire methodology and thinking about what is planning.

"There is no planning right now, in the sense that we don't know where we're going to be in six months, let alone two years, let alone five or 10 years. All that we know is that the world around us has changed significantly, continues to change and will likely never be the same."

This could mean, Moses says, that the working group may not have a finished strategic plan to present to General Synod by the time it next meets in summer 2022, as was [originally intended](#). It may, in fact, not end up producing a strategic plan at all, at least in the conventional sense.

"We will do whatever is appropriate for our times," she says. "There are many ways to face a future, and a traditional strategic plan may not be the best way to

proceed. We are open-minded to respond to what the church wants and needs."

At the last in-person meeting of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) March 13-15, the working group presented an update on its work, and a look toward the future. At that time, the group envisioned a planning process that would move forward in three phases and involve consulting with Canadian Anglicans through surveys and focused, guided conversations.

Before that meeting, Canadian society remained relatively untouched by the novel coronavirus. As of March 11, the number of Canadians who had tested positive for the disease was [barely over 100](#), about [one one-thousandth](#) of the total number of cases (including those who have recovered) at the time this article was being written, and workplaces, schools and churches remained open.

But March, as Canadians now know, was the month things changed. The federal government closed the border to non-essential travel March 16; in Ontario, a state of emergency, involving the closure of schools and businesses, and restrictions on gatherings of people, was declared the following day. Similar measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 were announced across Canada in the days that followed. A combination of decisions by religious leaders and orders by civil authorities resulted in the shut-down of in-person worship across the country. Economic chaos followed the virus, and in the Anglican Church of Canada, many dioceses announced financial relief plans for struggling parishes.

The onset of the pandemic was also a turning point for the church's strategic planning working group, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and a member of the working group,



It's a time to sit back and listen carefully, intentionally, deeply and respectfully to Anglicans during this difficult time.

—Judith Moses
chair, strategic planning working group

told CoGS when it met online June 13.

As COVID-19 hit Canadian society, the group “met and looked at each other and said, ‘Now what?’ recognizing that our original plans were not going to work,” she said.

The group eventually decided, Moses told CoGS also on June 13, to shift its approach. Instead of the surveys and in-person group consultations that had been planned, the working group intends a series of online “group listening sessions” involving specific groups within the church—executive archdeacons, bishops, young clergy, lay youth and young families, Indigenous groups and more. And in addition to inviting thought on the church’s future and strategic direction, organizers of these sessions will also aim to listen with sensitivity to how Anglicans are coping with the pandemic, provide pastoral support and generally help bring Anglicans across the country together.

“It’s a time to sit back and listen carefully, intentionally, deeply and respectfully to Anglicans during this difficult time,” Moses said.

“These would be open-ended questions, open-ended discussions, active, respectful listening. The whole approach is about sharing stories and experiences instead of critical analysis and problem-solving. It would seek to identify positive potential to carry forward into a transformed future for the national church starting from the present moment in the depth of a global pandemic.”

The meetings will take place beginning in early July, Moses told CoGS, with each group meeting as often as it likes. Janet Marshall, director of congregational

development for the diocese of Toronto, has been engaged as a trainer and facilitator for those directing the meetings. The strategic planning working group itself will not lead the discussions, Moses said, but hopes to attend them “in the background” and follow the conversations to track and compile the themes that emerge. The working group will report to CoGS in the fall, but this will likely be an interim report only, as the listening sessions are expected to go on for some time.

Coinciding with the launch of these sessions, and intended to be an aid in guiding them, a video has been prepared by national church staff. The 18-minute video is based on a paper, “On being church,” written by Nicholls, which also opens this issue of *Epiphanies*.

Updating CoGS on the strategic planning process with Moses on June 13 was another working group member, Canon (lay) Ian Alexander. The “convening and connecting” role that the planning group will play in facilitating the listening groups, Alexander said, ties into discussion at CoGS in March about how General Synod could best contribute to the life of the church across Canada.

“We think that not only is this good work for us to do as a strategic planning group, but it may be a demonstration of the kind of thing that only the national church can do—which is to bring people together, at a time like this, from across the country,” he said.

Another member of the working group, the Rev. Monique Stone—who is also rector of Julian of Norwich Anglican Church in Ottawa—says that, as a parish priest, she finds the “deep listening” approach more appropriate



I see this unique opportunity for the national church to really just listen, to really see what is happening. And maybe we're seeing it as an opportunity to not do things the way that we always do.

— Rev. Monique Stone, member of the working group
and rector of Julian of Norwich Anglican Church in Ottawa

to the chaos of the current time than surveys.

"If you came to me to answer a survey right now—I'm just not capable," she says. "We've been in this strange mode, and I would almost, as a parish priest, feel like that's not responsive to where I am right now."

Stone says that the church thus needs to explore this reality of dramatic change. The new approach, she says, will allow the church to question its assumptions more deeply.

"I see this unique opportunity for the national church to really just listen, to really see what is happening. And maybe we're seeing it as an opportunity to not do things the way that we always do," she says. "When we ask the question, 'How are we *being* church right now?' maybe that is going to push us to, 'How should we *do* church?'"

And the focus on deep listening, she says, reflects a pastoral concern, which the current time also calls for.

Though the pandemic has of course meant challenges for the church, it could also prove an opportunity for it to grow in new ways—and in fact already has done so, Moses says. She says she hopes the listening groups will capture this aspect of the pandemic.

"We never contemplated doing the kinds of things that we're doing right now in the church," she says. "They are innovative, they are creative, they are responsive, they are humane—all of those good things. Are we reinventing ourselves? This is what we want to get the pulse of. We want to see how people are doing, and whether within that, we can glean insight as to what the national church of the future might look like."

The progress of the church in dioceses and parishes across the country in shifting to online ministry has been particularly impressive, Moses says.

"It's our only tool at the moment to be able to reach people—so we're going to get good at this," she says. "So it's a new world. And it's quite exciting. I think you can look at this as a catastrophe; you can also look at it as an opportunity, and a blessing for us to be able to stand back from our normal daily, crazy, busy lives and re-think, re-invent. It's a time, I think, of very profound change, and we'll either manage it well or we'll manage it reasonably well or not well at all. It's in our hands how we respond to this and how we support Anglicans across the country."

Speaking to CoGS June 13, Nicholls said one thing the church had learned was that it could attract to online worship people who would never have stepped inside a church. And in the challenge brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, she said, there could also be the opportunity for the church to change for the better.

"This is a wonderful creative moment for the church. We've been washed out of our ruts, we're standing in the fog and we have a chance to do something radically new. And as we listen to the church, I think we may hear some things that will give direction to the national church going forward.

"The bigger question is, 'Can we do it all before 2022?' Possibly. Maybe not. We'll certainly have some things to share with General Synod, and invite them to reflect on this triennium, which will go down in history as a triennium of transitions, I think." ■



By Matt Gardner

STAFF WRITER

FULFILLING THE COVENANT

INDIGENOUS ANGLICANS
HAVE LONG DREAMED
OF A SELF-DETERMINING
INDIGENOUS CHURCH AS
PART OF THE ANGLICAN
CHURCH OF CANADA. NOW
THE WORK IS UNDERWAY
TO TURN THAT DREAM INTO
REALITY.

◀ Donna Bomberry, advisor to the Indigenous
House of Bishops Leadership Circle

PHOTO: SASKIA ROWLEY

In 1994, Indigenous representatives in Winnipeg gathered to write *A Covenant and Our Journey of Spiritual Renewal*. That foundational document pledged its signatories “to do all we can to call our people into unity in a new self-determining community within the Anglican Church of Canada.”

One of those representatives was Donna Bomberry, then-chair of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP). More than 25 years later, Bomberry is once again playing a central role in advancing self-determination for Indigenous Anglicans—albeit at a much higher stage of development.

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in 2019 [voted](#) to approve changes to Canon XXII enabling a self-determining Indigenous church. The task for Indigenous Anglicans now is to determine precisely what the Indigenous church will look like.

At the time this article was being written, the Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle (IHOBLC)—a group composed of Indigenous archbishops and bishops of the church; clergy and lay representatives; and staff support—was in the process of discussing the future constitution and governance structures of the Indigenous church. The goal is to produce a document for the next Sacred Circle laying out the plan for incorporating the Indigenous church as a fifth ecclesiastical province within the Anglican Church of Canada.

To help guide this process, Bomberry is serving as an advisor to the IHOBLC, as well as co-chair of the focus group tasked with developing the Indigenous church.

“It feels good that we’re making this progress, because it’s been a long time coming,” Bomberry says.

“We all have an innate sense of where we want to go,” she adds. “It’s [a matter of] how to put it in words and writing, so that the people will know that we’re all on the same page, and that we’re expressing how we feel [about] the focus of our national church of Indigenous ministry.”



The COVID-19 pandemic has delayed work on the structure of the self-determining Indigenous church. A key document was due to be presented at Sacred Circle in June 2020, for example, until the threat of coronavirus led to the gathering being postponed until 2021. The pandemic has also served, however, to underline

the importance of one of that church’s key priorities: responding to the needs of Indigenous communities. Development of the Indigenous church’s constitution has been temporarily put on hold in order for leaders to focus on addressing local needs in the wake of the pandemic, such as increasing support for community ministries.

As part of this shift in focus, Indigenous Anglican leaders have been trying to create a strategy for providing more resources and more equitable compensation for ministry in remote areas as well as urban Indigenous ministry.

Properly compensating non-stipendiary clergy has long been a priority for the Anglican Church of Canada’s Indigenous ministries department. A far greater proportion of Indigenous clergy work without pay than non-Indigenous clergy, often volunteering their time on top of secular jobs. Many Indigenous communities do not have any ordained clergy, obliging them to rely on lay ministers such as deacons, lay readers and catechists.

National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald says that those representing the Indigenous church are hoping to bring together the tasks of structuring the communal life of the Indigenous church and better supporting non-stipendiary clergy. Their strategy rests on two pillars: developing lay ministry in support of ordained ministry, and deploying paid clergy to support these efforts in turn.

“We’re going in two directions simultaneously, in that we’re going ... towards a bigger development of lay ministers, who will for the most part volunteer their time and ministry, and also developing more resources to support them,” MacDonald says. “We believe that this is the only possible ministry strategy that will work in our situation.”

The appearance of COVID-19 has only increased the urgency of preparing ministry to meet the needs of Indigenous people at the local level.

Lay minister training, for example, has become a major focus for Indigenous ministry since the spring of 2020, when travel restrictions in place as a result of the pandemic resulted in a shortage of clergy to perform funerals.

“We need more workers in the field to help with the funerals,” Bomberry says. To this end, Indigenous Anglican leaders have been preparing lay ministers to

perform funerals in communities where ordained clergy aren't available. "They can go through the bishop and call upon other people from other communities to come in to help, if the bishop can't do that."

Through online studies and videoconferencing programs such as Zoom, a new cohort of lay ministers has now completed that training. Many ordained clergy also participated in the training as a refresher for presiding over funerals.

"Now we're looking at other training that can be developed and what the needs are—youth ministry ... and other lay work," Bomberry says.



Having shored up the training of lay ministers, the IHOBLC has now moved back to discussion of structural and governance issues, such as the constitution of the Indigenous church. And it's become increasingly clear, MacDonald adds, that this structure may in turn be determined in some way by spiritual practice.

For example, he says, a critical part of helping shape the Indigenous church is gospel-based discipleship, in which those present read and reflect upon a gospel passage to help guide subsequent discussion.

Almost every gathering by groups planning the self-determining church has been framed by gospel-based discipleship, which the archbishop calls "foundational to our collective discernment [and] our decision-making process," and which he believes will leave its stamp on the eventual constitutional structures of the Indigenous church.

Besides drawing upon the gospel, the spiritual practice of the Indigenous church is being guided by the need for what MacDonald describes as "a deep healing of the wounds of trauma that plague so many of us." Learning about and responding to the needs of Indigenous communities, whether in cities or reserves, is a key element of this process.

"We're developing a church, I think, that is a little different than how the church has been structured in the past," Bomberry says. The new church, she says,

will be one "that is trying to meet the needs of the people, because often we felt that our current concerns weren't heard or understood in the past decades—that the church didn't or couldn't respond to our needs. That comes right out of our covenant.

"Our communities are different: north and south, east and west," she adds. "We're bringing our experiences together to help be a church that is responding to the needs—poverty, racism, missing and murdered women and girls, suicide. Those are very real and tragic events that happen in our communities, and we need a ministry that can respond spiritually to the needs of the people."

Representatives and leaders in national bodies such as the IHOBLC, ACIP, and the Indigenous church focus group are also active in ministry at the local level, allowing them to relay the concerns of their communities.

Videoconferencing and other forms of online communication, which have seen increased use due to COVID-19, have provided another avenue for Indigenous Anglicans at the local level to convey their own thoughts, feelings and concerns.

"The pandemic has offered us a kind of unique opportunity," MacDonald says. "We've been able to gather with Indigenous Christians all across the country and interact with them in ways that are somewhat constrained by the technology. But we have been able to daily interact with people from all over the land, and I would say that kind of local involvement has become as significant to our common life as the more central bodies [of governance]."



Elders are another source of guidance for the emerging Indigenous church, having long played a key role in forging the path towards Indigenous self-determination within the Anglican Church of Canada.

Lydia Mamakwa, bishop of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, recalls hearing conversations about self-determination among elders in the early 1980s, when she first became involved with the



Lydia Mamakwa, bishop of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, pictured here at a 2017 training event for Indigenous ministry in the church.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

church in what was then the diocese of Keewatin.

The self-determining Indigenous church is “not something new that has sprung up in the last few years,” Mamakwa says, “but rather we are building on what the elders have been saying all along.”

Today, the elders continue to provide counsel for bodies like the IHOBLC as they hammer out the structures of the Indigenous church.

“What we do is we consult with them,” Mamakwa says. “I consult with them ... the elderly people and the clergy, and they all say the same thing. That’s what we are building on—to implement and have their vision fulfilled.”

Mamakwa says her own experience leading the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh has also provided her with valuable lessons in what the self-determining Indigenous church might look like, and the elements most likely to provide it with strong foundations.

Along with the importance of seeking the wisdom of the elders, those lessons include the need to maintain strong communication with rank-and-file church members—a particular concern in a diocese like Mishamikoweesh, which has a relatively small population but a large geographical size.

“We try to keep everyone informed, all the communities, [about] what we are doing, even though it’s hard because of the remoteness and not everyone uses social media,” Mamakwa says. “I think it’s very important to keep the people informed and to have them onboard, and that they know what the goals and the aspiration of why we are doing what we are doing.”

Another lesson Mamakwa has gleaned from her time at the head of an Indigenous diocese is the importance to Indigenous peoples of retaining their identity through their own languages and cultures.

“Our elders have always said that we [need] to keep our language and to use it, and to help others that cannot read or write their language,” she says.

Mamakwa points to an annual gathering in Mishamikoweesh in which elders from surrounding communities help teach people about traditional spirituality, culture and life skills.

“Part of why we did that ... is because of what the elders have said all along—to keep our identity, and not to lose those traditions.”



As this article was being written, ACIP was scheduled to receive an update during the summer on lay ministry

training, youth connections and documents on the constitution. Still, Indigenous leaders say much work remains to be done on the self-determining church.

One of the areas that has seen a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic is the work of the Jubilee Commission, tasked with finding ways to fund the self-determining Indigenous church.

"I think that they've had to pause for a moment, as we see how the pandemic is going to impact our corporate life," MacDonald says of the commission—which he describes as "in a process of more active discernment than they had expected to be at this point in time" due to the pandemic.

"They are in the midst of continuing to work on data gathering from dioceses," he adds. "They're trying to describe in a better way the way in which resources have been used, are used and will be used. I've been able to observe a number of ways in which that work is continuing. But it's been a while since they've had a meeting.... I think there's a sense that we have to wait a bit while we find out what's going on in a broader way in the church before we can get too concrete on some of those plans."

Although the next Sacred Circle has been postponed, discussions will continue on these and other challenges Indigenous ministry encounters across Canada. And in the time of COVID-19, the Anglican Church of Canada as a whole also faces many of these same challenges, such as the difficulty of reaching people in remote areas or those without high-speed internet access.

Another pressing concern for Indigenous Anglicans is the need to develop more resources in traditional languages. While the Anglican Church of Canada has created many new resources in English over recent decades, such as the *Book of Alternative Services*

and revamped hymnals, Mamakwa notes that many Indigenous communities where traditional languages are spoken are obliged to use older resources. Cree speakers, for example, still use a 19th-century Cree translation of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*.

"We're behind in that way, keeping up with the current resources that are being used in the Anglican Church of Canada," Mamakwa says. "We have two hymnals in my area, and we're still stuck with those ... not that we don't like them. People still love them. But it would be nice if we had [translations of] the [current] hymn books."

Funding has been provided for a Bible translation project that began in 2014, which has focused on translating the Bible into languages such as Naskapi, Oji-Cree and Plains Cree. But Indigenous Anglican leadership members are striving to find ways to continue funding the work of translation.

Asked what she would like the Anglican Church of Canada to know about the developing Indigenous church, Mamakwa says there's a need for Anglicans to keep informed about the work that has been done to create it. They should read and educate themselves on the 1994 covenant, she says, and more recent statements that lay out the reasons why Indigenous Anglicans want a self-determining church.

"Most of all we need their prayers and their support ... and for them to know that this is not to divide the church, not to break up the Anglican Church of Canada, but rather that the Indigenous Anglicans would like to have a self-determining church within the Anglican Church of Canada," she says. ■

By Joelle Kidd

STAFF WRITER

LONG DISTANCE

REIMAGINING CHURCH MEETINGS IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

PHOTO: ALICE PHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK

With the COVID-19 pandemic putting a halt to in-person gatherings, the Anglican Church of Canada—like almost every organization—has had to reimagine itself through new technologies. Church services, meetings and other events have moved online, onto livestreaming and videoconferencing platforms.

On June 13, Council of General Synod (CoGS), the executive body of General Synod, held its first online meeting using Zoom videoconferencing. At that meeting, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Archbishop Linda Nicholls told CoGS all travel for church leaders would be suspended until at least 2021. The House of Bishops has continued regular meetings using Zoom, and staff of the church's national office have been working remotely since March.

So what do the church's leaders say about the effects of these changes? Have they been a boon, or do they have a dark side? And once Canadians' ability to gather in person is reinstated, will church governance ever look the same?

Flights grounded

In a June 13 [presentation](#) to CoGS, Archdeacon Michael Thompson, general secretary of General Synod, said that despite income losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

the Anglican Church of Canada has been able to avoid cutting work hours for its staff through a combination of reduced costs—especially from travel, meetings and *Anglican Journal* distribution—and continuing support from the dioceses. (The church also qualified for two periods of the federal government's Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, but did not see its income fall enough for it to qualify for a third.)

Thompson characterized the savings from suspension of travel and face-to-face meetings in 2020 as "substantial."

At a time when budgets are tight and travel is restricted, many organizations are questioning the utility of business travel. Air Canada expects business travel to pick up after the summer months, according to the *Globe and Mail*, noting an increase in demand for domestic travel despite interprovincial travel bans and mandatory 14-day quarantines upon arrival—though a return to 2019 passenger levels is three years away, according to the company's finance chief. However, a June 15 [article](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that some corporations were considering never reinstating the business travel forfeited during the coronavirus pandemic.

For secular organizations, business travel becomes a convenient-to-strike line item when income drops. "It's a

lot more palatable to say you're going to cut 30% of your travel, versus lay off more people," Sloan Dean, chief executive of Remington Hotels, told the newspaper.

But cutting flights means big savings for churches too. One of the "unexpected gifts" of COVID-19, Nicholls says, is the reduced expense it has meant for the church in cancelled travel.

Being forced to work and meet remotely is making the church reconsider what travel is necessary, she says.

"It's certainly making us say, 'Okay, we've just assumed we need to meet in person, we like meeting in person.' But if we don't meet in person, we also lose something. So we need to figure out, what is the balance?"

Nicholls says there are already conversations about continuing this year's suspension of travel into 2021. "No decision has been made on that, because it will depend what the rules are around the pandemic. Every epidemiologist talks about there being a second, possibly even a third wave of the pandemic, and in those times, things would be shut down again. And so, every meeting is going to be sort of planned tentatively."

With that in mind, church bodies are adjusting the ways that they meet—switching from long, in-person meetings to shorter, more frequent online ones, for instance. CoGS will be replacing its biannual three- to four-day meetings with single-day Zoom meetings every six weeks, Nicholls says. "That means that we can ... deal with issues that come up on a consistent basis throughout the year, which is different than [what] we have [done] in the past. And I think that's not a bad thing."

Nicholls says ceasing travel has meant a drastic reimagining of what her ministry looks like day to day.

"The first couple weeks were a bit like, 'Oh my goodness—what does the primate do when the primate

can't travel?'" she says. One of the first things she did, she says, was send out a message—first to bishops, then to parishes and dioceses—letting the church know she was available to attend online events.

Nicholls says she has remotely attended several confirmation classes, pre-recorded video sermons for parishes to include in their worship services, joined in on Zoom coffee hours, given the convocation address at the Montreal Diocesan College's online graduation ceremony, attended a youth graduation celebration in the diocese of New Westminster, given a blessing for the online National Indigenous Day of Prayer service, prerecorded a joint Anglican-Lutheran prayer service for Pentecost and been a guest on a podcast.

"It's allowing me to be in a lot more places than I could have been in person," Nicholls says. She even realized that because of time zones, she could attend more than one church in different parts of Canada on the same Sunday. "I was in Toronto in the morning and I was in the diocese of Caledonia in the afternoon."

While there have been downsides—recently, Nicholls was not able to participate in the consecration of Shane Parker, new bishop for the diocese of Ottawa—these do represent "ways that the primate would not normally have connected," she says.

"When I signed up to be a priest, I never thought I'd be doing videos in my living room," she says with a laugh.

"I've heard clergy who say that meeting on Zoom actually allows the congregation to get to know them in a different way than they do when they're standing up at the front of the church. And I think that's also a wonderful thing, that there are differences that are positive. And then we do lose something, and we have to ask how critical is that loss, and how can we make it work for us."



PHOTO: HANANEKO STUDIO / SHUTTERSTOCK

‘Spaces of hospitality’

CoGS’ planning and agenda team has been navigating these pros and cons as it switches to online meetings.

“I would say that we’ve started [the transition]. We need to figure out some more solutions,” says co-chair the Rev. Monique Stone.

“When CoGS gets together, there’s a lot of small-group work and a lot of opportunity for people across the country to connect with each other and share the experience of the larger church, the national church, and learn from each other. So we need to figure out, how do we enable those things to happen online?” The relationship-building that comes from meeting around a table or sharing meals together is difficult to foster online, she says.

Another question the team is working through is how to translate the consensus model used at meetings of CoGS into a format that works on a videoconferencing platform. At in-person meetings, CoGS members show their level of satisfaction with a motion by holding up a red, yellow or green card. While Zoom offers the ability to poll attendees, it may not offer the same nuance, and is difficult to use for those joining the meeting by phone.

“The primate, and planning and agenda [team], are pretty committed to having discussion and consensus,

and that it’s a specific model of consensus in our space,” says Stone. “But how do we make that happen?... Do we maybe need to figure out how we could incorporate some ‘low tech’ in the midst of having a high-tech meeting?”

Stone says evaluations were distributed to CoGS members in order to hear feedback on what might be improved and new ideas for moving the meetings online.

Of course, it’s not only churches that are moving to online platforms—organizations everywhere have had to. In the months since the pandemic began, there have been reports of “[Zoom fatigue](#)” or “[Zoom burnout](#),” with experts claiming that video calls are more exhausting than in-person meetings. The *New York Times* has also [reported](#) that some workplace inequities that show up at in-person meetings, like the tendency for women to be ignored or speak less often, are amplified in online meetings.

For Stone, choosing a platform is a question of accessibility. “In my own parish, not only did we turn to doing church online, we did not use Zoom as a product, because we felt in our church context it wasn’t inclusive enough for our seniors. We used a product that allows us to have a phone number that seniors can phone into without a PIN or an ID.”

For CoGS, she said, Zoom seemed a better fit, though there are still potential barriers. “If you make the Zoom

meeting too technical and you start sharing your screen and showing PowerPoints, then is that a barrier to someone who either doesn't have a visual opportunity or has a problem figuring out what's on the screen and how you expand it or move it around." Internet speed, which affects one's ability to speak and hear clearly in Zoom meetings, is another potential accessibility problem, she notes.

While it's possible to call in to Zoom meetings via phone line, participants using the phone are shut out from the platform's visual features, like screen sharing, or seeing the reactions of other meeting attendees—and vice versa.

Nicholls says that in meetings of CoGS and the House of Bishops, it is typically members who live in rural or isolated areas with limited internet access that have to join by phone.

"We still have to figure out, what does this mean for people who are further away?" she says. "One of the things we've discovered is that it might mean, since we're not paying for travel ... that somebody who didn't have a computer at home, we might need to provide with a laptop or an iPad, for the time that they are a member of the council, so that they can make that access possible. So we're having to figure out new ways of doing things." (Travel to and accommodation at CoGS meetings for council members is paid for through the General Synod budget.)

Stone says there must be a balance between technology and the need to bring people physically together, once in-person meetings are possible again. "I think one of the real great aspects of in-person meetings for a group that works on behalf of the whole country is getting together and building relationship. At the same time, we might see technology used more often, and more successfully."

In the meantime, it's important to be cognizant of the effects of these technologies, Stone says.

"There's a lot of emerging information about how tiring online meetings are, because [meeting online] does impact you in different ways physiologically. With your eyes, with focus.... We don't get those little breaks

that maybe we can self-monitor on in an in-person meeting," says Stone.

It's also worth remembering the different abilities that church members have, she says. "I think we always need to remember, how is anything we're doing that uses a technology platform either inclusive or [causing] barriers? How can even our online spaces be places of hospitality to all that come to a meeting or come to a worship service?"

Nicholls says she's seen many churches, perhaps out of accessibility or privacy concerns, shift from live services over platforms like Zoom to posting pre-recorded services online. This allows the service to be watched any time, and archived. "That is one of the curiosities—whether it's prerecorded or whether it's live, clergy have reported more people online than they have in person," says Nicholls. "And I think that this is kind of a silver lining around evangelism. I mean, people who would never have dared to drive to a church or walk up to a church, go through the doors and sit in a service, can sit in the comfort of their own home and click online and watch the service and have an opportunity to hear.

"Now that puts a burden on us that what they hear is well done and appropriate and reaches out. But I think it's an avenue for sharing the good news of the gospel in ways that we have been slow and resistant to," she says. "COVID-19 has dragged us into the 21st century."

Any technology has a dark side, Nicholls says.

"We could get so consumed with the technology that we forget its purpose is to help us to worship, to help us to build community. And I don't think it will ever replace being present with one another when we're able to."

At the same time, digital communication seems likely to help the church reach people. During the pandemic and even afterwards, Nicholls says, it "may provide us with another tool to be able to help us be who we want to be as God's people—to connect with ... people who can't travel physical distances and who can't be physically present.

"We just have to learn to use this well and to learn the skills and then say, 'When should we use it?' And that's going to be the big question as we go forward." ■



The COVID-19 pandemic has left many Indigenous parishes without clergy to perform funerals. In response, the church's Indigenous ministries department has provided online training for local lay leaders to perform them instead.

PHOTO: ECNORVAL/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Joelle Kidd

STAFF WRITER

ZOOMING IN

ZOOM-BASED TRAINING SEEN AS BLESSING FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN LOCKDOWN

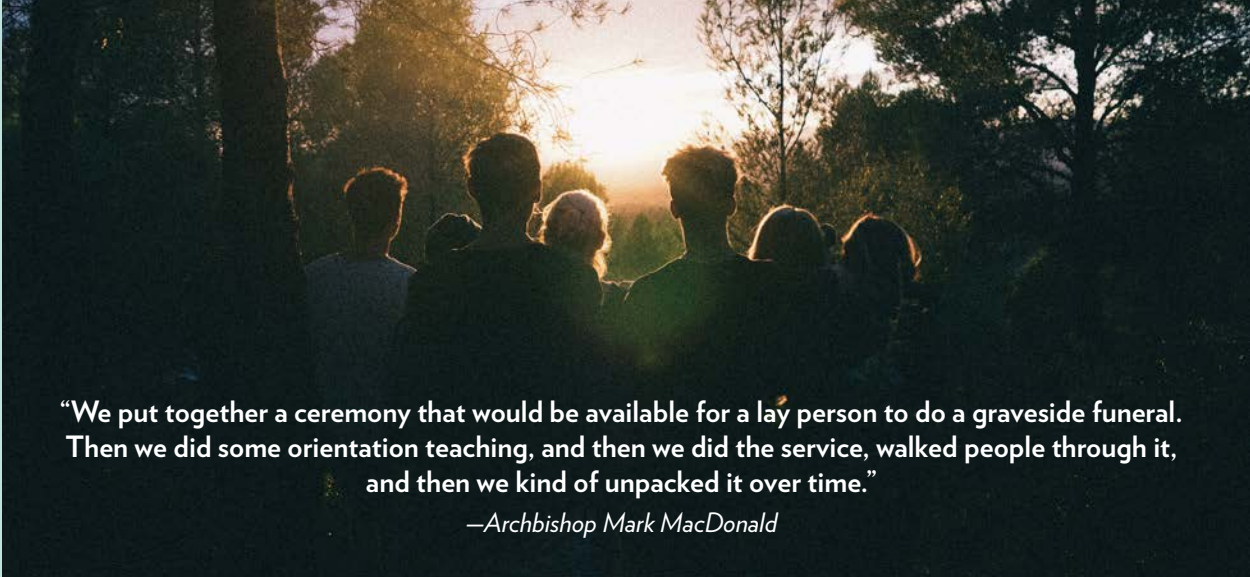
For the Anglican Church of Canada's department of Indigenous ministries, embracing Zoom videoconferencing technology has provided a solution to a major problem in the time of COVID-19 lockdowns. As many Indigenous people across the country have [set up blockades](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 into their communities, priests that usually serve multiple communities can no longer travel, leaving some parishes without a priest to perform funerals.

In response, the department began a five-week series of Zoom training sessions meant to equip lay leaders to

perform graveside funerals in their home communities.

The lockdowns have revealed, in addition to this immediate need, "a longer-term crisis of [not] having people in our more remote communities equipped to do services in their own communities," says National Indigenous Archbishop Mark MacDonald. Training more lay leaders would provide valuable support for these communities while allowing the ordained clergy to better do their work, he says.

The idea was drawn from a set of priorities obtained by asking Indigenous leaders what they need from the



“We put together a ceremony that would be available for a lay person to do a graveside funeral. Then we did some orientation teaching, and then we did the service, walked people through it, and then we kind of unpacked it over time.”

—Archbishop Mark MacDonald

PHOTO: DAAN STEVENS / SHUTTERSTOCK

church right now. MacDonald says it was brought before the Indigenous House of Bishops Leadership Circle and received great support.

The team of facilitators that came together to create and teach the program included MacDonald; Canon Ginny Doctor, coordinator for Indigenous ministries; Bishop Joey Royal, director of the Arthur Turner Training School in the diocese of the Arctic; the Rev. Kara Mandryk, coordinator of the Henry Budd College for Ministry in the diocese of Brandon; the Rev. Ray Aldred, interim dean of the Vancouver School of Theology; and Dorcas Mamakwa, representing the Dr. William Winter School for Ministry in the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh.

“We put together a ceremony that would be available for a lay person to do a graveside funeral. Then we did some orientation teaching, and then we did the service, walked people through it, and then we kind of unpacked it over time,” says MacDonald.

The training sessions were held by Zoom every Tuesday, and around 20 people attended each time, MacDonald says. Sessions included half an hour of gospel-based discipleship, half an hour of discussion about the work of ministry, and half an hour teaching “on the basic articles of our faith—the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and that sort of thing. It was fantastic.”

MacDonald says they have received a positive response to the training and are planning to continue, next moving on to teaching visitation for the sick. “We’re hoping to expand it over time,” he says, noting the team would like to see more people from the Arctic and potentially set up a similar program for non-stipendiary clergy.

The often poor quality of internet connections in remote northern communities, MacDonald says, has made this a struggle. There have been workarounds: a group of about five lay leaders in Kingfisher Lake, Ont., were able to meet in person to join the videoconference, and others have been joining via phone.

“Those of us who are in the facilitator/leadership role, we have really enjoyed working together. It’s been a great blessing, and we’ve enjoyed it greatly,” says MacDonald. “We had a sense that it was going well. But then when we talked to the people, they really were enthusiastic about us continuing.”

These training meetings are among several new initiatives Indigenous ministries has taken on during the pandemic, including holding gospel-based discipleship meetings via Zoom three times a week, broadcasting gospel jamborees and holding an online service for the National Indigenous Day of Prayer June 21.

MacDonald says that he is certain these types of online ministries will continue, even once travel restrictions are lifted.

“Martin Luther, among others, said that there’s the right hand of God, which is, God tells you through scripture what you should do. But the left hand of God is circumstance. God might tell you one thing, explicitly in scripture, but sometimes circumstances tell you something [else] that you needed to know.

“I think that we are experiencing this pandemic as the left hand of God. I’m not at all implying that the pandemic is God’s plan. But God is using it in a good way, I think, to create some opportunities that weren’t there before.” ■



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By Matthew Townsend
EDITOR

NORTH AND SOUTH

‘WHAT IS THE REALITY TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN CALLED?’

As the Anglican Church of Canada considers its future in an ongoing and evolving strategic planning process, it seems likely to encounter a familiar question: What about the North?

Not long after I joined the *Anglican Journal* team, I realized that the church's presence in the North—and the North itself—can sometimes feel misunderstood. My very first conversation with a bishop in the North was with David Parsons, who shared in a two-hour discussion by phone that there was a pretty serious building-related problem in the diocese of the Arctic: “Our church

buildings are too small for the number of people who want to attend services.”

Appreciating the nature of “the North,” and the church we find there, isn't a straightforward task. For me—a swamp-raised Floridian who hasn't been further north than Winnipeg—it's a topic that never seems adequately covered in the *Anglican Journal* by articles that never quite feel complete, no matter how long they are. How should the church face this question in its strategic planning process? What about the North?

“The North isn't universal or monolithic,” diocese



of Brandon Bishop William Cliff, who also chairs the Council of the North, told me when I started asking about planning and the North. “The North in every province is expressed differently. The North in Ontario—if you’re in Toronto, ‘the North’ is in Muskoka. The real North we’re talking about is a huge part of Ontario that most of Ontario doesn’t even think about.”

It’s all, he said, a bit of a Gordian knot.

“In Manitoba, the North is north of 53—the 53rd parallel—and that conjures a different understanding. It means certain reserves and developments by Manitoba

Hydro. It conjures a history of a relationship with Hydro which has been rocky at best. It involves treaty rights, it involves Métis people and their ancestral lands.

“Then you go over to Saskatchewan, and the diocese of Saskatchewan’s concept of North is different from what it is in Manitoba. Same thing in Alberta. And then you go to Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut/Nunavik—you’re going to be dealing with a different understanding of ‘Northernness.’ How do you plan for that?”





“When I first came to the North, what grabbed my senses and my soul was the peacefulness. [Sometimes, this slower pace] can be infuriating—to wait for answers or wait for something to happen.”

—Lesley Wheeler-Dame, bishop of the diocese of Yukon



PHOTO: JOEL SPARKS / SHUTTERSTOCK

Different contexts, same church

These varied realities make it difficult—perhaps impossible and inappropriate—to offer a single prescription for northern churches, according to other bishops who serve in the North.

Bishop Lesley Wheeler-Dame, who was elected in the diocese of Yukon in May of last year, is one such voice. Wheeler-Dame, who grew up in southwestern Ontario, found a more relaxed pace of life when she made the move. “When I first came to the North, what grabbed my senses and my soul was the peacefulness,” she told me. Sometimes, this slower pace “can be infuriating—to wait for answers or wait for something to happen.”

Yet, the bishop said, this waiting is one of the keys to a listening model of strategic planning, to which the strategic planning working group of the Council of General Synod (CoGS) recently shifted.

Listening to those practicing ministry in the North

can involve trying to appreciate contexts very different from those found in southern Canada. Often, these contexts involve Indigenous peoples, who make up a large percentage of the northern church.

Isaiah Larry Beardy works with northerners in two provinces, as Indigenous suffragan bishop of the Northern Manitoba Area Mission of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh and assistant bishop in the diocese of Brandon and Missinipi Northern Saskatchewan in the diocese of Saskatchewan. Context frames how he thinks about strategy. “We have to work from the locations we’re at and also the circumstances that are around us,” Beardy told me. He works with 14 communities, most of which have all-weather road access, ranging from about an hour north of Winnipeg up to Shamattawa, at the 58th parallel. Most of these are Cree communities—but three are Ojibwe, one is Métis and another is Dene. Two communities require flying in, including Shamattawa, at a cost of more than \$1,000 for a round-trip ticket.

At the time of my interview with Beardy, one of the roads had recently been flooded by heavy rains. The winter road season has also been impacted by climate change. And then there's COVID-19. There had been no cases in northern Manitoba, Beardy said, though life had been affected by the pandemic.

"Those are the things that we deal with in real life," Beardy said. Then there are the social issues, sometimes only known to southern Canadians as statistics, related to overcrowded housing, economic development and dependence upon very limited social assistance to purchase very expensive goods. People who live where he ministers might pay \$10 for a jug of milk—while trying to live on a \$200 monthly cheque, he said.

In his region, it's often volunteers who offer ministry in these circumstances—non-stipendiary clergy and lay people who balance other obligations with church work.

"I'm not sure the church as a whole grasps the difference" between leadership structures in the North and South, Wheeler-Dame said. "I believe that it is more a question of living within a certain context. We tend to pick up the realities around us—within our own sphere of reference. I find that what the South doesn't get is the reality that we don't have the same type of quick access to resources that are available in the South. That of course affects our leadership structure."

Wheeler-Dame cited a visit from her mother, a priest in the diocese of Huron, to Telegraph Creek, one of the diocese of Yukon's parishes in the civil province of British Columbia. Her mother commented on the amount of time needed to drive from one place to another. "So, the bishop cannot get out to visit communities and parishes in the same way. That doesn't mean we are deprived or

are a 'have-not' diocese. It just means we adapt and find a different way."

In the face of such different contexts, it might be tempting to imagine the Anglican Church in the North as a

separate, far-off entity—the 'have-nots' that are removed from the organization with a head office in Toronto. Bishop of Saskatchewan Michael Hawkins cautioned me against this kind of thinking, especially in terms of imagining a shared future for the church.

"One of the problems in any plan, or thinking about the North, is there can be a very dangerous tendency for us in the South (and from many points of view, I'm in the South): we tend to think of 'those people in the North' as opposed to understanding they're us in the North," Hawkins told me. "Sometimes people will say, 'What can we do for the people of the North?' It's the church. It's the Anglican Church of Canada there. It's us there; we are in the North. We have a large presence in the North and a large history—complicated in many ways, but we still have a real presence and ministry in the North."

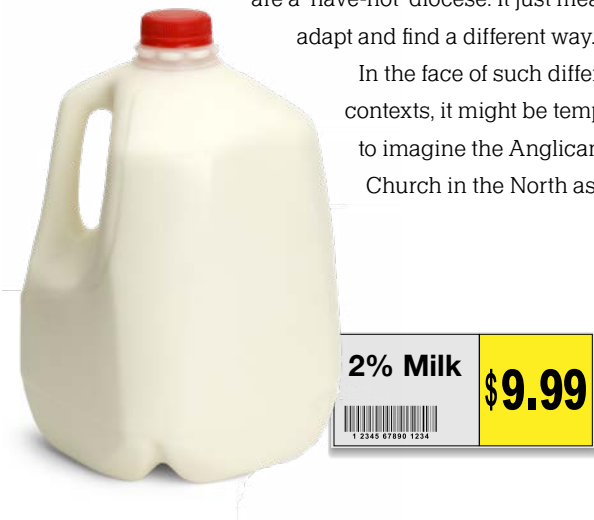
Hawkins echoed what Cliff, Beardy and Wheeler-Dame had to say about the importance of local communities. This, he said, is where the process of strategic planning must start. "I think whatever direction we go in, and there will be a direction, [the approach] needs to be much nimbler than most of us can even imagine."

The Prince Albert-based bishop distinguished greater nimbleness from an oft-cited goal in strategic plans inside and outside the church: self-sufficiency. In the North, he said, "the church never really became a settled church. Some dioceses distinguish between self-sufficient parishes. We have none in Saskatchewan. No one is self-sufficient. And that's not a bad thing."

"I think the folks in the North have a lot that they can teach the rest of the church about what you can do with what little you have," Cliff said. "My folks in Brandon, we couldn't function without lay readers. We have lay readers who are amazing lay leaders who don't only just lead worship on Sundays but take funerals and do hospital visiting. They are genuinely very switched-on Christian leaders in their parishes. They just happen not to be ordained. I think the South could actually use a good dose of that, to de-clericalize a lot of the work of the parish that does not need to be clericalized."

Beardy said lay readers are very involved in the life of the church in his region—and this has only increased in the time of COVID-19. Many have stepped up to provide help with funerals during travel restrictions, ensuring the work of the church continues.

"Ministry in the North is alive," Beardy said.





“We [the council] are the largest budget item in the General Synod, which represents an ongoing, faithful and generous commitment of the church to ministry in the North”

—Michael Hawkins, bishop of the diocese of Saskatchewan

PHOTO: JIM PRUITT / SHUTTERSTOCK

Growing partnerships, evolving approaches

The bishops I spoke with were quick to acknowledge the generosity of donors located across Canada and of the church at large.

“If you ask most Anglicans what General Synod did or what their apportionment did, they would not say, at the very top of the list, ‘Support ministry in northern communities and congregations.’ And yet that is the case. It’s a remarkable commitment, and ongoing even in the midst of some budget tightening,” Hawkins said. “We [the council] are the largest budget item in the General Synod, which represents an ongoing, faithful and generous commitment of the church to ministry in the North.”

The partnership between North and South made significant strides during the latest process of strategic

planning, the bishop said. “Vision 2019 included an enormous emphasis on the ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada in the North. While we struggled to fulfill some of those goals, the emphasis in the planning document was commensurate with the commitment of Anglicans across the country and of General Synod to that ministry.”

Beardy also cited the support received from elsewhere. “We do depend a lot on the Anglican Church and Indigenous ministries, and also we do work with the Council of the North,” he said. In terms of strategy, the council, the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) and the national department of Indigenous Ministries, along with the church’s northern elements, “pretty well have to start looking at different ways of handling ministry.”

Beardy pointed to a budget deficit experienced last year by the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh, for which he recently launched a [GoFundMe campaign](#) to seek additional donations. “The



“The disparities in wealth in Canada are reflected in the dioceses of the Canadian church. That’s just a fact. It’s not a criticism, it’s just a reality. Everyone’s expected to do more with less. But less looks different in different part of the country.”

—William Cliff, bishop of the diocese of Brandon

message seems to be getting out there that we do need help to carry on the ministry.”

“Funding is always an issue here,” Cliff said. “We have a growing church in the North, and we have diminishing resources. That growing church is growing among people who cannot necessarily contribute in the way that parishes in the South can.

“The disparities in wealth in Canada are reflected in the dioceses of the Canadian church. That’s just a fact. It’s not a criticism, it’s just a reality. Everyone’s expected to do more with less. But less looks different in different part of the country.”

Cliff mentioned that some donors he knows have been “amazed at the bang for the buck you can get. When the Council of the North puts on a program, we put in for a grant—and more often than not, there’s money left over and we end up turning it back. Because we’re really good at being careful and frugal and accounting for our money, because we are all accountable to each other.”

When generosity can’t create a church in the image of the South, how should the church function in the North?

In his diocese, Cliff said, he’s worked to develop locally raised clergy and has used Indigenous teaching circles and discernment circles to talk about candidates for ministry in the North. “How do we fit those kinds of adaptations into strategic plans?” he asked.

“The Council of the North, as a group, has repeatedly said that we need to look at who we are and what our mission is.” Cliff said that the emergence of the

Indigenous church—which, while not uniquely situated in the North, is largely present in the North—means a new kind of partnership. “We’re in a partnership in such a way that we’re both working with diminishing resources. The way the Council of the North functions has not really been revised in a long time. The documents that form the Council of the North are in the appendix of the General Synod handbook, and they’re from the ’70s. And all they refer to is ‘the North’—which I think in 1974 conjured a different vision in the church, conjured a different view of things. Which certainly isn’t the same relationship we have now.”

Hawkins said he’s seen a shift in how the North itself understands planning and partnerships. Back in the early 2000s, he said, the council tended to focus upon sustaining operations. “We needed to have a bishop, the bishop needed to have a staff, and we needed to have trained and paid clergy.” By 2009, however, the system had been eclipsed by an emphasis on emerging ministry, changing structures, greater cooperation, an emphasis on youth and experimentation.

“The former primate used to refer to the Council of the North as a kind of laboratory,” Hawkins said.

Part of the evolving approach to partnerships, planning and ministry involves the Indigenous church, now self-determining—which Hawkins, Cliff and Wheeler-Dame (all of whom identified as non-Indigenous bishops serving in dioceses with many Indigenous Anglicans) named as a key piece of any strategic planning process.



“The problem with General Synod is it can be a bit like a wrestling ring.... We need to have conversations across the church that do not make people feel more vulnerable and do not allow us all to turn into being defensive.”

—Michael Hawkins, bishop of the diocese of Saskatchewan

PHOTO: EMOTIONAL DEBATE ABOUT THE MARRIAGE CANON AT GENERAL SYNOD 2019, VANCOUVER, B.C. CREDIT: MILOS TOSIC

Walking together, learning together, working together

Each bishop I spoke with emphasized that the process of strategic planning would need to involve a spirit of “walking together”—a phrase used throughout the Anglican Communion to suggest that groups who find themselves in disagreement can still continue their common journey.

It’s not unusual for this phrase to appear around debates regarding same-sex marriage in the communion—especially when disagreement seems intractable. Indeed, this was the case when General Synod released a statement on sexuality discernment at its 2010 meeting, which it again cited in the “Word to the Church” statement passed by CoGS and affirmed by General Synod in 2019.

After last year’s General Synod failed to pass a

resolution amending the marriage canon—thus not authorizing same-sex marriage throughout the church—walking together might have seemed a tall order. Public statements and speeches emphasized unity, but among people in favour of the resolution, quiet conversations around dinner tables and louder comments on social media offered a different take: the result of the vote was someone’s fault. The resentments and fears that emerged on each side seemed to tap into narratives about stark differences. It was that long-perceived distance between North and South. Or maybe it was the gulf between urban and rural people. Or perhaps conflict between orders (lay, clerical and episcopal) was at issue. And as National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald [told the *Journal* at the time](#), some blamed Indigenous Anglicans, assuming all had voted against the resolution.

A sentiment I heard emerge at the meeting, however, held that caricatures of the North, the South, Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people had no place in

the faith—and generally weren't accurate. Indeed, one finds some of Canada's most conservative Anglicans in Toronto, while many Northern Anglicans favour same-sex marriage. At the end of the day, it wasn't a walk in the park—but I think it's fair to say that Anglicans left the meeting walking together.

For people like Bishop Hawkins, the roles into which Canadians (northern and southern) are called at meetings like General Synod tend to reinforce this sort of adversarial thinking. For him, walking together is as much a literal call as a figurative one.

"One of the areas we have not worked on is to get people to visit each other. The problem with General Synod is it can be a bit like a wrestling ring," he said.

Hawkins described General Synod as a kind of neutral territory in which members serve neither as host nor guest. "I think when we meet as host and guest, we're often on our very best behavior, and we come with an openness and an appreciation for the other. I still have hope that we could develop more fully—there was an idea about this back in the '90s, some way of getting people to visit each other in their realities.

"We need to have conversations across the church that do not make people feel more vulnerable and do not allow us all to turn into being defensive."

A great deal of my conversation with Bishop Wheeler-Dame centred around this notion of learning about one another's reality in a loving way.

"There is no question in my mind but that we are called to live out Matthew 28:16-20. Not one of us has all the answers as to how we live out the Great Commission. We are all just fumbling along trying our best to understand what God is calling us to do and be," she said. "I believe that if we all acknowledge that 'my' context is different than 'your' context and that is okay, we will do well."

Wheeler-Dame said this acknowledgment involves listening. "We need each other and can learn from each other.... The differences don't make one better than the other but the differences are a blessing to, and in conjunction with, one another."

The bishop cited the Book of Acts, noting that the church, as it formed, "certainly had its struggles. And yet at the same time, they worshipped together even within those differences." Thus, moving beyond assumptions that the way someone—or some diocese—lives out

the gospel is "wrong" could lead to more learning and accompaniment.

"I need to acknowledge for myself that I must live into my present reality. My present reality is not going to be the same as yours, or another diocese. My present reality isn't even going to be the same in Whitehorse as it is in Old Crow, for example.

"Does that mean that either is wrong? No. It just means that that's the truth for them." As an example, she offered, "If I do lay training in a certain way in the diocese of Yukon, it doesn't necessarily mean that it is absolutely the right way. But it also doesn't mean that the diocese of Huron should do it in that way."

The bishop suggested we tend to ask the wrong question as we observe our differences, trying to discern which way is more "right or wrong" than the other. Instead, she said, we should just consider our different experiences as truth—and recognize that someone else's truth might benefit us. "I need to be willing to acknowledge that your truth is right for you, and that I can bring some of your truth into my reality."

Wheeler-Dame added that the unchanging truths across church contexts are found within the gospel and the Great Commission.

Arguably, one of the central purposes of self-determination—and the formation of a self-determining Indigenous church within the Anglican Church of Canada—is the recognition that contexts vary but the mission does not. In this sense, Bishop Beardy offered a very similar description of the work ahead.

"In order to move on, we have to work together nationally with Indigenous ministries and also the [broader] Anglican Church of Canada, so we can walk together in providing ministry, loving our people and feeding our people the Word, the Scriptures." Beardy said that his region is therefore trying to follow along with General Synod and the provincial synod—while also giving notice that they are now self-determining and have a plan for the next four to five years (somewhat set back, he says, by COVID-19).

Walking and learning together also means, for Beardy, working with people beyond the church. "Strategically, the church in the North is partnering with organizations and our political leaders," he said. "We work with them and also the many programs that agencies have. They call upon the church to provide spiritual leadership so we



“Because we live in the North together, we have to learn to work together. Indigenous communities, we do things collectively. Community is very important. That’s our priority. Also, at the same time, we help individuals on their journey in life.”

—The Rt. Rev. Isaiah Larry Beady, Indigenous suffragan bishop of the Northern Manitoba Area Mission of the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh and assistant bishop in the diocese of Brandon and Missinipi Northern Saskatchewan in the diocese of Saskatchewan

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

can promote holistic healing programs. They want us to help them out on the spiritual component of that healing [from colonialism] and development of our people.

“Because we live in the North together, we have to learn to work together,” Beady added. “Indigenous communities, we do things collectively. Community is very important. That’s our priority. Also, at the same time, we help individuals on their journey in life.”

The planning work ahead, according to Cliff, should include efforts to break down assumptions between geographically disparate groups—recognizing that northern Anglicans might feel accustomed to drawing the short lot.

“The reality is that when you’ve lived on the edges, in the liminal spaces of the church ... you get used to being discounted or ignored,” Cliff explained.

“I want to do away with as many assumptions as possible about the North, and let people understand and see who the people of the North really are.”

“There has to be relationships of trust,” Hawkins told me. “If people feel as if their back is at the wall or there’s a subplot to any plan, it will doom us. Building that kind of relationship is key, and it’s the right time to do it. We have spent a lot of time and focus on things we disagree about—and spent a lot of energy and done some hurt to each other and the church’s reputation in that process. I think it is time to gather us all around—but top-down is not going to work nationally, provincially or at the diocesan level.”

Gathering around, Hawkins said, includes “learning again to deal with each other with some kind of real gentleness and respect. I think it means rebuilding relationships and connections across all kinds of divides—whether they’re the sort of political or theological issues of the day, or historical differences, or the dreadful betrayals, the terrible things that have been done to Indigenous people across the country by the church and in the church. The process will not work unless we can

build a stronger web of relationships.”

“What I want the strategic planning group to know,” Wheeler-Dame said, “is that the North needs the South just as much as the South needs the North. We are the whole church, the whole body.”

Wheeler-Dame said she received two pieces of advice that she has put to use in the North, both in planning processes and daily operations. “The first was given to me by a bishop 23 years ago. That advice was ‘just love the people.’ The second piece of advice was given by Mark MacDonald in 2017 at the national consultation regarding formation. That advice has been a mainstay, a reality of the fabric of life for Indigenous peoples and has been used by the church in the North. That advice is: ‘Listen to the elders.’”

These two pieces of advice go hand-in-hand with building up the church, the bishop said. “We might believe that the way the elders did things doesn’t work anymore. But there were reasons why the elders did things the way they did them.” It’s this reasoning, she explained, to which people should lend their ears.

“The South will benefit from the North if it heeds those two pieces of advice. The North definitely will benefit from being a part of the planning process, because we can get stuck in our ways and methods, as does the South.”

Lessons and precedents

This concept of listening to the elders—or considering what has already worked or is working in the North—was echoed in my other conversations when I asked the four bishops what southern churches might learn from the North.

Cliff said that he believes that northern churches have something to offer urban and suburban churches, given their experience with living on less. We spent some time discussing how churches in the North were planted—that many were established by Indigenous catechists like Henry Budd—and the ways in which Northern churches have managed to thrive without ever having been churches of the establishment.

One of the possible lessons from the North that Cliff cited was the way in which lay readers supplement the work of clergy instead of serving as supply during vacations.

“In the diocese of Brandon, lay readers were

divided into three groups: those that help with worship services; those that also have extra training in parish administration and preaching; and lay readers who are trained catechists who might be working for theological training beyond a lay certificate,” Cliff said. “People inhabit those places in the structure of lay readers based on what their personal comfort is, and what their discipleship-mission is. I think it’s possible to be a lay disciple for Jesus and have a gift for preaching, and taking some of the load off local clergy—and not be the thing that is *this is just the fill-in for the real stuff*.”

The presence of “intelligent, theologically developed, thoughtful catechist laity who lead Bible studies, lead small groups, shepherd souls in the way that laity can shepherd souls,” Cliff said, frees up clergy to pursue discipleship work that is geared toward their order. These efforts built on the existing culture around lay readership he found in the diocese.

Beardy also spoke of history and of strategic moves that were already happening in the North. “History tells us the missionaries came and brought the gospel. Our people accepted the gospel because traditional spirituality that was being practiced was telling the same thing ... love your neighbour, love everybody,” he said.

“Looking at the history of my people, that’s what our elders taught us. And we didn’t have clergy. I remember as early as 1900, in my community, there was no clergy. I think it was like that all over the North. Our elders basically carried on the ministry as catechists. They carried on the ministry. They did the church services. They provided that ministry in the life of the community.”

Since the community itself was responsible for the continuation of ministry, communities became rooted in faith, Beardy explained. “When I talk about the church, I’m talking about in many communities, the church is the community. It’s not a congregation on Bloor Street. It’s a faith community and the centre of that community is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

As the northern church developed, it was less tied to buildings. Beardy said elders prayed morning and evening in their tents, singing at noontime. “Sundays you rest on the land, roasting a moose hindquarter and eating that all day and saying prayers all day. That’s how life was on the land. So those kinds of practices carry on, and a lot of our communities had visiting missionaries and they left—and the elders carried on.



PHOTO: KYLE SORKNESS ON FLICKR

Better internet connections, Beardy says, would mean a greater church presence in northern fly-in communities, some of which can only really receive in-person visits once a year due to expense.

"The strategic plan is to move towards that, to train local leaders in the community to carry on the ministry."

Another element of strategy that Beardy discussed with me—and one that may vary substantially from expectations held by southern Canadian Anglicans—involves the church's direct role in seeking federal funding and infrastructure improvements.

The bishop told me about an emerging sense that the federal government should be providing funding for ministry in the North—based upon the precedent from a bleak chapter of Canadian history. Day schools (one of which Beardy's father attended) were said to be funded by the church—but in reality, and according to records he's reviewed, "that history is distorted" and the church really operated as a destination for federal funds. "The federal governments paid the dioceses for these services," he said. But if the government provided funds to the church to suppress the culture and spirituality of Indigenous peoples, perhaps it could provide funds to the church for healing and ministry.

"This question has to be asked to the federal government, because it's serious, because all of us know the federal government has fiduciary responsibility for Indigenous people in Canada. The federal government, through the Indian trust money, must provide spiritual services for all the Indigenous communities across Canada," Beardy said, adding that he hopes the church will help lead that conversation with the government.

"It's up to the government to get on the bandwagon on reconciliation, eh? We need to work together. The government has been making great strides on this for many years," the bishop said, citing substantial improvements in the education of Indigenous people by Indigenous people since the '70s. "I think there are precedents already set, in place, that we can look at as part of our strategic plan."

Likewise, Beardy suggested the church should be directly advocating for greater internet access in the North—a need that has become especially apparent since the onset of COVID-19. "Internet services are already identified as a need right across Canada—not only in Indigenous communities, but also in rural Canada." This could also reduce pressures around church building expenses, he suggested, since it provides a form of communication in which a building is not required. He said Bell Canada is currently installing better



“The North does not have it all together, but the North has more patience to wait for the answers. The North has learned, and is still learning, to be adaptable and to make use of what it does have rather than trying to force its resources into being something they were not intended to be.”

—Lesley Wheeler-Dame, bishop of the diocese of Yukon

infrastructure in Northern Manitoba, and that the church could both call for more infrastructure improvements and provide training.

Such advocacy would also mean a greater church presence in fly-in communities like Shamattawa, which can only really receive in-person visits once a year due to expense. “We still have to connect to that community through a proper [internet] infrastructure. We can have confirmation classes on Zoom. We can have training for lay readers on Zoom, even for clergy. Places like Henry Budd College are doing that already. They’re using technology to reach out, to do some diploma programs with people who are interested in going onto ordination, or just to learn the Bible. Those kinds of things need to be included in the strategy that we’re talking about.”

Cliff also cited infrastructure concerns—noting that people in the North are accustomed to seeing slow (and sometimes no) progress on promised improvements. Wheeler-Dame said the patience of Northern peoples, especially around delayed change and limited resources, is a strength that can be learned from.

“The North does not have it all together, but the North has more patience to wait for the answers. The North has learned, and is still learning, to be adaptable and to make use of what it does have rather than trying to force its resources into being something they were not intended to be,” she said.

“We make do with what is available and instead adjust our own expectations. During this pandemic, for example, in our diocese, we have had to learn about making use of technology. Anyone looking on from the South would have a good laugh at our awkwardness. ‘Why haven’t

we made use of it before now?’ Because it was certainly available in small ways.”

The answer, Wheeler-Dame said, lies in the complexity tied to technology in the North: overage fees, limited bandwidth, slow connections, lack of infrastructure and the high cost of IT support and training. “So the body of Christ might learn patience; awareness of existing abundance of resources; how to become more adaptable and willing to adjust expectations; and to ask if the expectations we have are even realistic.”

The bishop emphasized, however, that she believes both North and South in Canada have much to learn from one another—together, not apart. “I think that the North, in terms of strategic planning, needs to be listening to the South as well. I think that strategic planning for all of us must be recognizing that we can’t always separate ourselves. That each has good practices, and each has practices that don’t work so well. So we need to be able to ask each other, ‘How do you do this?’ and look at [whether to] adapt that way or that method into our current reality.”

She added, “I think the only thing we can say that the whole church should be doing is being the whole church, and not separating.”

Hawkins also cautioned against assuming that growth among northern churches offers a lesson for the South.

“In the face of the general decline that we have been experiencing for many years, anyone that is not declining as much as others can be filled with a self-righteousness that is destructive to their soul but also makes them unhelpful to others. The context in many of our northern communities is very, very different. The idea that some things that appear to be working numerically could just

be reduplicated—that everyone [should do] what we did in those places where we have real growth—is mistaken.”

Like Wheeler-Dame, Hawkins pointed towards being the whole church—especially through greater exchange. “We need to do things in confidence and hope and humility when the final structure and shape of it is not always clear. That requires trust,” he said. “It requires trust both in God and in God’s direction. But also trust between people.”

Building that trust, Hawkins said again, involves moving beyond that “neutral space” of General Synod—the wrestling ring he mentioned. “The experience of hospitality, I don’t think we emphasize it enough in the church. The experience of cross-cultural worship and fellowship is a profound thing,” he said. “I might say things to you at General Synod that I would never say to you as a guest at my dining room table. Ever. Never, ever.”

For his part, integrating more hospitality into decision-making processes involves recognizing that the Northern church is on Indigenous land.

“An abiding respect for the people of the land—which is a biblical term—is required, which requires a kind of humility as well, on our part. I also think it’s all about relationships: we need to grow relationships in which we know each other better but also trust each other more. The governance working group has done some remarkable work for and with ACIP and other groups over the years.” When that has been particularly successful, he said, it has been undergirded by trust and mutual support.

Hawkins said that one of the great downsides of COVID-19 has been the reduction in face-to-face meetings—meaning fewer opportunities for people to learn about each other and their contexts. Prior to the pandemic, the bishop worked to support people from elsewhere in Canada coming to Saskatchewan.

“One of the things people say (God bless them) is, ‘What books should we read before we come?’ I say, ‘None. You need to come with an open mind and heart, with an openness and a desire to appreciate.’ And not even understand—because a desire to understand people can be a desire to ‘figure them out,’ which never ends well.”

Hawkins said these trips have been successful at building an appreciation between people of such different backgrounds. “It’s just one small thing, but they

come.” The bishop added that a web of interpersonal relationships can help keep the church and the wider communion vital as formal structures become more strained.

Wheeler-Dame shared a similar thought on structures and the purpose and relevance of the church. “Certainly, COVID-19 has shown us that what we are doing does not work. I think we have far too much focus on structure and not enough focus on the message and the reason that we exist. The reason we exist is to live out the Great Commission.” The commission, she said, “has to do with what is the reality to which we have been called. I do think we always have to be doing strategic planning, it has to be an ongoing process. But let’s not just do strategic planning for the sake of strategic planning.”

Since moving to a diocese with a presence in the North, Cliff says he has become keen to ensure that planning yields positive results for the people there. “My experience of the faithfulness of northern peoples has changed me,” he said. “I have an understanding of—after four and a half years of living with and working with and admiring people of the North in my diocese—their resilience and their patience and their work attitude.”

Beardy, in my conversation with him, offered a reminder of that resilience that can be found among challenging conditions in the North, as people work together to face hardship.

“A lot of our people are dying. One-third of our population, on average in Northern Manitoba, has chronic illness. So we have people who have heart attacks, people are dying of cancer, complications from diabetes,” Beardy said. “Where in the past we used to have a funeral twice a year, now it seems like we have a funeral two or three times a month.”

Such challenges demonstrate the care and love offered by local non-stipendiary clergy, lay leaders, community elders and choirs. “They put a lot of work in funerals,” he said.

Regardless of the challenges and the limitations, he said, the church moves forward.

“The church in the North lives out its life as a Christian community. That’s our life. We live it day to day, and we breathe it, we eat it, we smell it. And we don’t respond to it just on Sundays. It’s our daily life. Whether we have financial resources, we have to try to live it out to the best of our ability.” ■

By Tali Folkins

STAFF WRITER

FOCUS ON FUNDRAISING

ANGLICAN FOUNDATION'S NEW THREE-YEAR PLAN SETS SIGHTS ON FINANCES

General Synod isn't the only body in the Anglican Church of Canada to consider strategic planning of late. The Anglican Foundation of Canada (AFC) recently approved a four-pronged strategy for boosting its fundraising in order to continue operating and providing financial assistance at its current levels.

This May, the AFC approved a new strategic plan for the years 2020-2023—one to replace its most recent roadmap, which had covered 2017-2020. The new plan continues many of the priorities of the previous one—especially the old plan's third goal, enhancing philanthropy.

The new plan focuses on fundraising, the planning document explains, as a means of increasing revenues used to pay for the foundation's annual operating budget and grants. In recent years, AFC has closed funding gaps with money from bequests and reserves, but the organization is aiming for a more sustainable approach.

"AFC needs to have a focussed fundraising strategy with achievable annual targets to ensure we do not rely on unpredictable bequests and/or draw down our assets," it states.

The new plan was spearheaded by Brian Cameron, a member of St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Ottawa and—until he retired this May—chair of the AFC's strategy committee.

"We do have a fairly large fund that's been built up over the years, but most of it we want to keep in place—we can draw on the interest, but we don't want to have to go in and draw down our capital," Cameron says. "We've been lucky in the last couple of years [with the bequest] ...

But we can't rely on that kind of thing. So this plan looks at how we can fund our operating costs and our annual grant cycle from donations from contributions from parishes from individuals, major gifts."

In tackling this challenge, he says, the plan also addresses other factors that are closely tied into it, such as raising Canadian Anglicans' level of awareness of the foundation and increasing its membership.

"The issue that was facing us, and is still facing us to a large extent, is that people see the Anglican Foundation as this large pot of money sitting in Toronto that's available when parishes need some serious work done on their infrastructure—a new roof, a new boiler, you know, a whole host of things. But there hasn't been the recognition that we can only do that if we expand our base of donors, and that there's a sort of mutual obligation on the part of parishes and dioceses to pitch in and be part of what we're doing."

One area the AFC wants to prioritize in the coming years, Cameron says, is its ability to attract large donations. Hence, the first of the four elements in the new strategy—which aren't, he says, numbered in order of importance—is concerned with major gifts. It calls for hiring a consultant to develop a major gifts strategy, and to include experience in soliciting large donations as a desirable attribute in future board members.

The foundation has already accomplished the first of these priorities. In January 2020, it brought on Peter Wall, retired dean of Niagara and a past vice-chair of the foundation's board, as gift consultant, on an initial one-year contract. Along with seeking such gifts, Wall



The Anglican Foundation of Canada’s strategic plan has four main elements.

has been engaged in related tasks, including working to get the foundation’s message out via its network of representatives in the dioceses and writing a [blog](#) for the AFC about generosity.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the planning document notes, has made fundraising of all kinds more challenging—and this, Cameron says, is especially true of the plan’s first goal.

“We’re facing more of a challenge than we expected from the point of view of major gifts, because, of course, with COVID-19 people are alarmed, obviously, and they’re facing financial challenges. Those who have more money than others are looking at what’s happening to their investments and wondering when they’re going to recover, how long that’s going to take.”

At the same time, the document suggests one longer-term outcome of the pandemic may be to actually increase giving by church members, if the experience of missing

worship during the temporary suspension of services makes them value their church communities all the more.

A survey the foundation performed at the 2019 General Synod, Cameron says, suggested that there’s considerable potential to increase the number of donors, and thus a second goal of the plan is an annual five-per-cent increase in the number of individuals and parishes that contribute. The plan sets out a number of means of reaching this goal, including holding a reception at House of Bishops meetings once in-person meetings resume, and instituting, instead of the current \$50 minimum contribution required for membership, a system of “proportional giving” in which recommended contributions vary according to the size of a parish’s operating income.

The foundation also believes it can convince all the Anglican Church of Canada’s bishops to become members, he adds, and expects to be contacting them

individually about the importance of the AFC's work.

The plan's third goal calls for the strengthening and expansion of the foundation's representatives in the dioceses, through such measures as making sure all the dioceses have representatives; currently there are five that do not. The AFC is hoping these reps will encourage past recipients of grants and bursaries who are not currently donors to "pay it forward" by donating, Cameron says. The plan also envisions the creation of a network of representatives in the parishes.

The fourth goal, he says, is longer-term: a coordination of fundraising efforts on the national level of the church and with AFC and PWRDF (Primate's World Relief and Development Fund).

Complicating fundraising in the Anglican Church of Canada, the plan states, is the fact that Canadian Anglicans are asked to donate by several national sources at various times of the year. General Synod's Resources for Mission department has its annual Giving with Grace campaign; the *Anglican Journal* has its own annual appeal; and the AFC and PWRDF appeal to donors in various ways. These appeals create the impression that the field is crowded with competing players, rather than bodies whose ministry is mutually complementary, the plan states.

Instead, it continues, AFC is very willing to have

a conversation about collaboration in fundraising, drawing on a theology of abundance, not scarcity. The idea, Cameron says, is that having all these efforts fall under a single planning process would be more conducive to hope, rather than anxiety, among Canadian Anglican givers. Wall, he adds, has begun speaking with Archbishop Linda Nicholls, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, on working toward this more coordinated approach.

Cameron says that despite the heightened element of unpredictability that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought, it remains important for the AFC to plan beyond the immediate future.

"We always recognize that things will change over the three-year period, but if you don't have that three-year vision in place, you're kind of lurching from one thing to the next," he says. If you've put a lot of thought into ... the longer-term things that need to be done, you're going to be in a much better position to focus on the essentials when you have to make decisions. And when you do have to make important decisions, you refer back to the plan and ask, 'Is this in line with the values we put forward in the plan? If not, has enough changed that we need to adjust it?'

"I think it's really important to have those goalposts in place, and in mind, at all times." ■

By Janice Biehn

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR, PWRDF

STAYING THE COURSE

PWRDF'S STRATEGIC PLAN SHAPES A STRONG FUTURE, DESPITE PANDEMIC

In 2019, the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) unveiled its five-year strategic plan. No one could have predicted that the first year of the plan would be interrupted by a global pandemic; however, PWRDF is aiming to stay the course.

The strategic plan is distinct from past documents because it stretches over five years instead of three. Staff members felt that a three-year period was not enough time to effect the desired results.

This five-year plan comes on the heels of an institutional evaluation that was conducted in 2018. The 360-degree evaluation, conducted by outside consultants, produced 74 recommendations which board and staff have shaped into one master plan.

The strategic plan focuses on five areas:

- organizational sustainability;
- partnerships;
- results and impact;
- collaborating;
- and Indigenous reconciliation.

In March 2020, PWRDF's Strategic Plan Working Group reviewed progress against Year One of the strategy and the recommendations made in response to the institutional evaluation. The working group is chaired by Mike MacKenzie (diocese of Nova Scotia/P.E.I.) and includes Valerie Maier (diocese of Yukon and board chair) and Basil Pogue (diocese of Qu'Appelle and board secretary). Executive Director Will Postma and Director of Development Partnership Program Zaida Bastos are staff representatives.

In response to the goal of institutional sustainability,

PWRDF has invested in a new fundraising and donor management software called DonorPerfect. This transition is underway. It will allow the organization to improve its relationships with individual donors and explore new avenues for fundraising.

Partnerships include PWRDF's work in empowering women. "Staff have indicated that more progress is required on recommendations relating specifically to PWRDF's gender lens," writes Mike MacKenzie. Progress is anticipated in the coming months with the return of Bastos from a sabbatical leave (which was used to study the intersection of international development and gender).

PWRDF has always been proud of the results that its partners achieve with support from Canadians and, in some cases, the government of Canada. In 2019, those results were noticed by Charity Intelligence, which ranked the PWRDF among the top 100 charities in Canada. *Macleans* and *MoneySense* magazines soon followed suit.

Collaborating is the lifeblood of PWRDF. As a relatively smaller player in the international development sector, the organization knows how to leverage resources and disburse development and humanitarian funds efficiently through organizations like the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the ACT Alliance. A key collaboration is with Global Affairs Canada. The All Mothers and Children Count program, funded with a 6-to-1 match from the Government of Canada, came to an end in March 2020. But thanks to our strong reputation with Global Affairs Canada, PWRDF was selected to be among 10 organizations to have its program extended for a year, in order to support our partners as they cope with COVID-19 in their vulnerable

LOOKING AHEAD



A sustainable future

We will steward our resources wisely through innovative fundraising, volunteer engagement, sharing our success stories and by working with youth on global justice issues.



Mutual reconciliation

We will accompany and support First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, guided by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the priorities of Indigenous communities and organizations in Canada.



Strong partnerships

We will leverage our resources by partnering with local development organizations, especially those working to empower women and girls and respond to humanitarian crises.



Collaborative approach

We will foster a culture of learning and innovation for staff and volunteers in Canada, as well as for our partners, as we support one another in the pursuit of inclusion, peace and justice.



Meaningful results

We will strive for improved food security and resilience in the face of climate change, and support programs around gender equality and accessibility to health care, including care for mothers and babies, in the most vulnerable communities.




Components of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund's five-year plan

communities.

Progress has also been made in the area of supporting Indigenous communities and organizations across Canada. A significant investment was made in extending the reach of the education for reconciliation tool, Mapping the Ground We Stand On. In June 2019, nine people

attended a training session in Winnipeg to learn how to facilitate a session, and a video was produced to promote the resource. The facilitators started promoting and leading workshops at churches across the country. When COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, PWRDF intends to ramp up the workshops and resume this important work. ■



By Matthew Townsend
EDITOR

PHOTO: CHRIST CARRYING THE CROSS, OIL ON CANVAS BY TITIAN, 1565, MADRID MUSEO NACIONAL DEL PRADO

POSTSCRIPT

PRAYING AS THE WORLD CHANGES

ASKING GOD FOR PATIENCE IN HARD TIMES

PHOTO: MARTIN SATTLER/UNSPLASH

What does healthy discontent with the church look like?

I've been rolling that question around in my mind for the last few months, discussing it with others close to me. In some ways, the question has been spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic: for each person I know who is satisfied with the response offered (or not offered) by the church, I find someone eager to lament the choices made by their priest, their parish council, their diocese, their ecclesiastical province or their denomination. Some are hurt, some are bitter, some are rebellious and some cry out for change.

In other words, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Discontent with the church, especially in times of trial, isn't exactly new. I think often of the Israelites' complaints to Moses as they continued their

exodus from captivity: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food" (Numbers 21:5). (I always imagine them signing air quotes around that miserable "food.")

God sent venomous snakes to the Israelites to respond to their discontent, which awoke them to their pettiness and became a symbol of healing.

I don't know that we've quite reached that point with the novel coronavirus, climate change or the myriad other apocalyptic snakes that slither at our feet, but I am starting to think that my own discontent with the church has tended toward the unhealthy—and that perhaps that discontent blinds me both to what I have and to misfortune I've managed to avoid. Perhaps you can relate.

So, how do we distinguish a thirst for change from discontentedness? And is there a difference?

I don't purport to have answers to these questions, but they seem important ones to ask as the church undertakes a process of strategic planning. In my conversation with Bishop of Saskatchewan Michael Hawkins for the "North and South" article in this issue of *Epiphanies*, he suggested that we tend to approach decision-making in the church with an "everything's on the table" mentality and find out very quickly that little is on the table—that we may struggle to agree upon the scope and nature of changes we'd like to make.

As the Anglican Church of Canada tries to imagine a future that is presently unimaginable, I'm inclined to believe that we will all see—and perhaps experience—discontent as plans and ideas emerge in response to a rapidly changing, increasingly ailing world. How will we assess the church's choices as old certainties fall away? Opinions will vary dramatically. Too much will be on the table or far too little. We'll be losing the baby with the bathwater, or we'll be forgetting to get rid of the tub, too. We'll be cutting off our nose to spite our face, or we'll fall short of envisioning a totally new face of the church. We're going to hear it all.

How we process these feelings as they arise within our congregations and within our own minds, I think, may determine the shape of the church far more than any strategic plan. How will we respond to the emergence of a new plan, especially if we don't like parts of it? Will we forgive church leaders, fellow Christians and our neighbours when things don't go as we'd like? How many times will we forgive? How many changes and failures to change will we endure?

In a small faith-sharing group in which I participate, we recently discussed the First Epistle of Peter. Upon re-reading this passage, I felt I finally had

my answer to the question of healthy discontent:

The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:7-11)

This strikes me as both guidance and prayer, useful as a loving reminder and powerful as a personal petition. Can there be any healthier way to express your discontent than through a prayer to be filled with kindness, generosity and sobriety, all in the name of Jesus Christ? So, I pray:

Dear God, the world seems to be spinning out of control. Keep me alert and disciplined in my prayers. More than anything, help me live in constant, redeeming love for everybody. Let my hospitality be endless, generous and without complaint. Make my tongue, my hands and my heart a conduit for the light of Jesus Christ, the source of all goodness. Amen.

Whether the end of all things is near or we've merely met the serpents of our time, God calls us to patience, faithfulness and forgiveness. Wherever the church is headed and however frustrated we might become along the way, let us pray that God would keep us on our most important path of all: the way of Jesus Christ. ■

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