



## Q & A from the Rev. Donald Davidson

### **What would be your top priority as bishop for the Diocese of Western Newfoundland (Labrador Straits) over the first year of your episcopacy?**

If entrusted with the ministry of bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Western Newfoundland, my first priority would be to rebuild and deepen relationships of trust across the diocese. Before strategies, programs, or structural changes, the work of the first year must be the work of listening, presence, and pastoral accompaniment.

A diocese is not first an institution; it is a community of people called together by Christ. In times of strain or uncertainty, what people most need from their bishop is not quick solutions but a steady pastoral presence that helps the body remember who it is and whose it is.

In practical terms, my first year would be shaped by a diocesan listening pilgrimage. I would travel widely across the diocese -- from Corner Brook to the Labrador Straits, from larger parishes to the smallest congregations -- to sit with clergy, wardens, lay leaders, and parishioners. I would listen carefully to their stories: their hopes, their griefs, their fatigue, their deep love for their communities and their Church.

These conversations would not be formal consultations alone. Much of the most important listening in the Church happens over kitchen tables, in parish halls, and on the drive between communities. The purpose of this pilgrimage would be simple: to allow people to be heard, to honour their faithfulness, and to begin rebuilding confidence that the bishop walks alongside them.

Particular care would be given to supporting and encouraging clergy, many of whom serve faithfully across large geographical areas and multiple congregations. Clergy cannot sustain their ministry without knowing that their bishop understands the realities they face and stands with them. Creating space for clergy conversation, prayer, and mutual encouragement would be essential in this first year.

Alongside listening, I would also seek to gather the diocese around shared prayer and the rhythms of the Church's life. The Daily Office, the Eucharist, and the liturgical seasons remind us that the Church's hope does not come from our own strength but from the faithfulness of God. Re-centering ourselves in these practices helps rebuild not only trust, but also our sense of common purpose.

Only after such listening and relationship-building would it be wise to speak about priorities or direction. The bishop's role is not to arrive with answers already formed, but to help the diocese discern together what the Holy Spirit is calling us to be and to do in this time and place.

If the first year succeeds in strengthening relationships, renewing confidence, and helping people rediscover the joy of walking together in Christ, then the groundwork will be laid for whatever faithful work lies ahead. In the end, the most important task of a bishop is to help the Church remember that we belong to one another, and we belong to God.

## **Our constitution requires a strategic plan for the diocese. What would be the main components of your plan for the diocese?**

I have never believed that a diocesan vision or strategic plan should be dictated primarily by the bishop. To be effective, vision must be owned by the whole Church, and so it must be developed in community. At the same time, the bishop has an important responsibility: to help gather the Church in prayer, listening, and discernment so that a common vision can emerge.

A strategic plan for the Anglican Diocese of Western Newfoundland must begin with a simple truth: the Church is not sustained by plans alone, but by the grace of God and the faithful lives of its people. A strategic plan should therefore not feel like a corporate document. It should read more like a shared map for faithful discipleship in this particular place and time.

If called to serve as bishop, the strategic plan I would help the diocese shape would grow out of the listening and relationship-building of the first year. The role of the bishop in that process would be to listen carefully, encourage honest conversation, and help the diocese discern together the direction in which the Holy Spirit is already leading us.

Several core components would guide that work.

### **1. Strengthening discipleship and spiritual life**

The first task of the Church is always to help people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. A diocesan plan should therefore focus on encouraging practices that sustain faith: regular worship, prayer, engagement with Scripture, and lives of service. These practices do not require large programs or complex structures. They grow best through simple, faithful habits within parish communities.

A priority would be strengthening lay leadership in worship and pastoral care, and nurturing small communities of prayer and study so that our congregations remain spiritually grounded and resilient.

### **2. Supporting and sustaining clergy and lay leaders**

Clergy and lay leaders across this diocese carry significant responsibilities, often serving multiple congregations across large geographic areas. The bishop has a particular responsibility to ensure that those who carry this ministry are supported and encouraged.

A diocesan plan should therefore strengthen opportunities for continuing formation, peer support, and pastoral care for clergy, while also investing in the training and encouragement of lay leaders who sustain the life of our parishes every day.

### **3. Encouraging collaboration among parishes**

In a diocese where many communities are small and distances are great, collaboration is essential. Rather than each parish feeling it must do everything alone, the strategic plan should encourage regional cooperation, shared ministry initiatives, and creative partnerships between congregations.

We are better together. We are stronger together. Such collaboration strengthens ministry and reminds us that we belong not only to our local congregation, but to the wider body of Christ.

### **4. Engaging our communities with hope and compassion**

The Church exists not only for itself but for the communities it serves. To serve Christ faithfully, we must first know our neighbours and understand their needs, and then seek to meet those needs with the love of Christ.

Often the most powerful ministries in small communities are simple ones: welcoming spaces, food programs, pastoral presence, and partnerships with local organizations. These quiet acts of faithfulness are often where the Gospel becomes most visible.

### **5. Stewardship of resources and buildings**

Faithful stewardship must also be part of any plan. Buildings, finances, and other resources are gifts entrusted to us. Caring for them wisely ensures that the Church can continue its ministry for future generations.

This requires honest conversation, thoughtful planning, and shared discernment rooted in hope rather than fear.

In the end, a strategic plan should not be measured by the number of initiatives it contains, but by whether it helps the people of this diocese live more deeply into their calling as the Church: a community of prayer, service, and faithful witness to the love of Christ.

**As a bishop, it would be your responsibility to further pre-existing relationships and develop new ones for the Diocese of Western Newfoundland. How would you work to build relationships with various groups and their leaderships both within our Diocese and across the wider church.**

As bishop, one of my most important responsibilities would be to nurture and strengthen relationships -- within the diocese, across the wider Church, and within the communities we serve. The ministry of a bishop is, at its heart, a ministry of connection: helping people remain in relationship with one another, and helping the Church remain engaged with the world God loves.

Within the Anglican Diocese of Western Newfoundland, my approach would begin with presence and listening. Relationships grow when people know that their bishop is accessible, attentive, and genuinely interested in their ministry. I would seek regular opportunities to meet with clergy, wardens, lay leaders, and parish communities -- not only through formal gatherings such as Synod or clergy conferences, but through parish visits, regional meetings, and informal conversations. In a diocese where communities are spread across great distances, these personal connections become especially important. Trust is built when people know they are seen, heard, and valued.

At the same time, the bishop plays an important role in helping the diocese remain connected to the wider Church. I would work to strengthen relationships with neighbouring dioceses, with the Provincial and National Church, and with our partners across the Anglican Communion. These relationships allow us to learn from one another, to share resources, and to remember that our ministry is part of something much larger than ourselves.

A particular priority for me would be continuing to strengthen ecumenical and interfaith relationships. Throughout my ministry I have worked intentionally to build collaborative relationships with leaders from other Christian traditions and with neighbours of other faith communities. These relationships are often rooted in simple but meaningful acts: shared community projects, joint prayer services, pastoral collaboration, and standing together in service to those in need. In the communities where I have served, these partnerships have strengthened the witness of the Church and deepened mutual respect and understanding. I would hope to encourage similar opportunities across this diocese, particularly in smaller communities where churches already share deep relationships.

I would also remain committed to supporting the Church's ongoing journey of truth, reconciliation, and right relationship with Indigenous peoples. This work calls the Church to listen carefully, to acknowledge the painful history of the residential school system, and to walk humbly toward a future shaped by respect and justice. As bishop, I would seek opportunities to build relationships with Indigenous leaders and communities within the region, ensuring that the diocese continues to approach this work with sincerity, humility, and openness.

In the end, relationships are not built through programs alone. They are built through presence, respect, and a willingness to listen deeply. My hope would be to serve as a bishop who

helps foster those relationships -- within the Church and beyond it -- so that together we may continue to bear faithful witness to the reconciling love of Christ.