

Priorities for the first year as a Bishop.

Bishop is called to be a chief pastor and shepherd of the diocese. Jesus used the shepherd as an image and role in various gospel passages. The parable of the Good Shepherd expects us to follow Jesus in the following manner:

- Jesus is the good shepherd who cares deeply for every sheep in his care.
- Jesus creates a haven for the sheep. He ensures that all are together through their commitment to follow Jesus and in communion with one another.
- Jesus searches out the sheep who have left the community because of fear, danger, anger, and frustration with the surroundings and other sheep.
- Jesus valued every sheep equally, regardless of their state of mind or issues with him or others.

The parable of the Good Shepherd is timely and appropriate in the context of this election. The past fourteen months or so have been challenging for the clerics and the laity. Sadly, the diocese was unable to resolve its differences and disagreements amicably. For various reasons, social media, print, and other media outlets were used to convey the point. The proverbial battle lines were drawn, and members on both sides of the disagreement vociferously expressed their opinion; others observed it with sadness and concern for their local churches and the diocese. Personally, I watched, listened and worried about the state of the community and prayed for healing and reconciliation for the diocese.

If elected and called to be your bishop, in accordance with the challenges of the Good Shepherd, my immediate priorities will be as follows:

- To impress upon everyone that a bishop is a chief pastor to every lay and cleric member, regardless of their disagreements, grievances, and anger.
- To listen attentively and prayerfully to the major stakeholders of the diocese to seek a resolution to the issue.
- To provide pastoral care to persons on both sides of the issue, with hope that all concerned will commit to support the mission and ministry of their local churches and the diocese.
- To create an environment of mutual respect and interdependence for one another.
- To inquire and lead the process to set up:
 - accountability for everyone, regardless of their position in the diocese.
 - Just and equitable system for both volunteers and paid employees.
 - To appoint a safe working space officer for the diocese.

The strength of a leader is the people entrusted to their care. The burden of a leader is to ensure they can listen to both their critics and their supporters. And the humility of a leader is to be willing to follow others.

Strategic Plan:

Bishop Leonard Whitten commissioned the review of the constitution in the first year of his episcopacy. One of the committees added to the existing structure was the 'Planning Committee'. The committee's membership was the functional Canons and five lay persons appointed by the bishop. The mandate was to lead the diocesan strategic plan for the next five years. This was, in my recollection, the first intentional development of the plan. It was received with a bit of trepidation and excitement. We were excited to have a focused mission and ministry in the diocese. Our trepidation stemmed from fear of failure, as it was a new beginning for the diocese. Bishop Whitten's priority was to make the diocese a praying diocese and to discern our response to the world and the diocese from it. We did become a praying diocese and discerned that we should engage actively with the following National Church projects.

- Advocacy to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to forgive the unpayable debt of the world.
- Endorsing the full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada.
- Signing on to the settlement for the victims of the Residential Schools. The settlement was our commitment to contribute \$375,000.00 over the next five years to the settlement fund. Our prayerful response enabled us to pay off our commitment in three years. The parish that I was serving at the time was exempt because of its financial situation, however we did not accept this and paid our fair share as well as being the only parish in the diocese of Western Newfoundland that did a special intention and raised funds for the National Healing fund.

Within the diocese, we were intentional in:

- raising lay leaders by inviting them to be a part of the diocesan committees.
- held several diocesan missions of evangelism and prayer.
- Had a prayer chain in every congregation/parish
- addressed clergy burnout and struggles. The Privacy Act prevents sharing specific examples.

The timing of this strategic planning coincided with my earning a diploma in Community Development, with a special focus on integrating persons with developmental disabilities into the wider society. My studies equipped me to lead a strategic planning process. The planning process can be organised into six columns.

- First, to enunciate goals which emerge from the mission and vision statements.
- Second, to set up objectives (activities) to achieve the goals.
- Third, to delineate the first-year, three-year, and five-year results from the activities.
- Fourth, to delegate committees to oversee a goal and its objectives.
- Fifth, to have a timeline to implement the activities.
- Sixth, an evaluation system to ensure goals, objectives, and activities remain relevant and applicable to the diocese and the parishes.

I will initiate the review and the evaluation of previous diocesan strategic plans, and the learnings will be the basis of the strategic plan for the next five years. The source of the discernment will be the members in our pews. They will be widely consulted at the parish and the deanery levels. Their insights, dreams, hopes, and plans will be the foundation for the plan. I would encourage people to be irresponsibly optimistic with their dreams and visions. In other words, it will be turning the pyramid upside down. The top will be the congregants, and the bottom will be the bishop. The bishop will take directions from the laity and clerics to articulate the vision and mission. Certainly, I will lead the process, from the goals to the evaluation. But make no mistake this is the work and vision of a team not an individual. We will entrust the Spirit to guide us and God to strengthen us to proclaim Jesus' gospel through our words and actions.

Forging new and sustaining existing relationships:

We do not talk to, or bare our souls to, strangers. As a priest, I have been intentional in building relationships of mutual respect with the members, particularly those who differ from my theology, missiology, and interpretation of the Bible. The intentionality in building trust and relationship imparts on them the sincerity, and in return, I have learned from their theology and specific stands on issues facing our churches. This has been a foundation of my ministry as it involves every member in mission, ministry, and the liturgy. St. Paul's Fort Gary, my present parish, has received New Canadians from different parts of the world. They have brought new life and vigour. The new and the old members have blended well and worship as one family.

The following have been the foundational principles for developing relationships:

- Our unity is in diversity, not uniformity.
- We are called to be in fellowship with one another.
- Everyone has a right to their opinion; we are not called to convert the other to our way of thinking.
- Mutual respect is incredibly important.
- A spiritual leader (deacon, priest, bishop) must be impartial (to the best of their ability).
- All of us exercise baptismal ministry in different capacities. St. Paul used the human body as an analogy for the Church. Every part of the body contributes in its own way to human activity. Likewise, every baptised member contributes to the mission and ministry of the church.

Guided by the above-mentioned principles, as a bishop, I will reach out to the various diocesan groups and bodies to strengthen relationships and endeavour to forge relationships with those who feel isolated and neglected by the church.

I will have the same approach towards the groups and ministries outside of the diocese. The time has come for us to abandon our silos (comfortable pews with like-minded people) so we can appreciate and marvel at the Holy Spirit's work in other groups. Within the geographical boundaries of the diocese, I will pursue and offer cooperation, respect, and support on the relevant matters. During my incumbency, the parish of Forteau worked with the community to have a school that was closed transferred to the community for the various groups to avail of, including the

ACW. Likewise, Gallant's municipal council agreed to absorb the operating and maintenance costs of the Holy Trinity church building during my time with the parish of Stephenville Crossing, with the guarantee that while there was a worshipping community there the worship space would remain. The above-mentioned examples kept the ministry going without the financial burden and costs.

The relationships with governmental and non-governmental bodies will bring new opportunities for the congregations to envision their future. The Anglican Church of Canada has several ministries and groups which can assist us in reshaping, reimagining and rebuilding the diocese. I will be diligent in seeking out relationships with like-minded ecclesiastical, governmental, and non-governmental agencies for mutual benefit and the service to the wider community.

A Bishop represents the diocese. I will represent it with grace and humility, and with the desire to enrich the diocese through the relationships. It will be a team effort; I am not now nor have I ever been a one-person show. A wise person once said, 'The paths we create today will be the roads on which our children will travel.' Together, the diocese of Western Newfoundland can and will create new paths to proclaim the gospel.