

Reverend Canon Terrance Coates

1. What would be your top priority as bishop for the Diocese of Western Newfoundland over the first year of your episcopacy?

There has been a tremendous amount of division and strife in the Western Diocese over the past year. This has created hurt amongst clergy and laity resulting in a framework that is not conducive to the mission of the church. We are reminded of the five marks of mission:

- i) To proclaim the Good News of the kingdom,
- ii) To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- iii) To respond to human need by loving service
- iv) To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- v) To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

It is imperative that we move back to recognizing and living by these marks of mission. One of the most important things I hope to bring to this position include transparency and my pastoral skills. I believe one of the first things that is necessary includes the reaching out to clergy and laity to get a firm understanding on where everyone stands. It is important from a clergy perspective that the bishop first visit each parish to get their individual perspective and understanding for a means of moving forward. This will start by meeting with each parish and then deaneries. Following this and the gathering of information, a clergy retreat is imperative to begin a process of healing and reconciliation. This could range from a three day to a full week event whereby all clergy can openly discuss issues they see a means that all can move forward. It is also imperative that the person chosen to head up this retreat is fully equipped with the understanding of the issues and having the technical expertise to meet with all parties involved. This person should also have a good spiritual background in order to better understand all persons involved.

Then, it will be necessary to also bring all findings and recommendations this back to the individual parishes for their feedback. I do not see this as a complete fix over a single retreat. I hope that through the discussion with clergy and laity, we then can build a framework of how we proceed ensuring that this process continues and that all persons feel comfortable with an open format where each and every person is respected. It is my hope that through this process, we can begin to mend broken fences and build up trust that is essential for the building up of our church allowing faith, love and compassion to come to the forefront.

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

The process for the development of the strategic plan for the diocese would also entail collecting of information from all parishes in our diocese. The key component for this plan has to center around where we are heading with declining numbers in our parishes and individual churches.

The first thing that must be evaluated is the discipleship campaign that was started under the previous bishop. At this point, there has been no final report outlining successes and / or failures with whatever recommendation came out of that strategic plan. From this, we will determine what parts can be utilized in the new strategic plan.

I believe it is apparent that we have decreasing numbers in our churches and we need to determine as part of this plan how we move forward. The youth largely have become disengaged with the church. We will need through discussions with the youth to determine why this has happened and how we can make provisions so they are actively involved. In larger centers, this may involve having the church as an afterschool program where it helps parents financially but also gets the youth involved in the church. By increasing their involvement in the afterschool program can increase activity associated with Sunday school programs and outreach programs. Many other churches have utilized similar programs with significant growth and involvement.

Another important issue with this plan is that we have a clergy population that is aging. As clergy retires and less clergy are graduating from theology schools, a new mechanism is required to ensure that the laity are ministered and provided with spiritual care. I believe it is integral to have a strong clergy group as we make decisions on how we will transform from where we are today. Some of the current models include part time ministry but that in itself creates issues as we have worked on a full time ministry model for a very long time. Another model that will require attention in line with this one includes where lay persons hold service on a weekly basis with ordained clergy coming for Holy Eucharist at a minimum of once per month. Visitation groups will be established such that the elderly and sick receive their visits. We have begun a process in our diocese of raising clergy up; this will need to be looked at with the expectation that further education is required to ensure clergy are equipped to provide necessary care and administration of their respective parishes. We will continue to look outside the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to determine how we can best encourage clergy to come and become an integral part of our diocese

This model will be looked at in conjunction with clergy and laity through a series of meetings very similar to how is described in the healing and reconciliation. Transparency and openness is critical in developing the framework that works well for the diocese.

3. 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?

I would hope to utilize many of the tools and skills that I have developed in my previous vocation. I also believe many of these are transferrable to the position of Bishop of Western Newfoundland. My approach to leadership is rooted in humility and hope. I believe in empowering laity and staff, nurturing new leaders, and cultivating an atmosphere where creativity, compassion, and prayer flourish. I have experience with strategic planning, stewardship initiatives, and the careful stewardship of sacred spaces and resources. I am deeply committed to transparency, accountability, and the shared discernment of God's will for the community.

I would first reach out to the other two bishops in our province: Bishop John Watton and Bishop Sam Rose to begin my working relationship with them. Through these discussions, I would hope to reach an understanding of the groups they are involved with and the work they are doing. Through this, I would be able to get valuable contact information and verify where they are with the groups they are working with. I would also contact on the broader Anglican Church of Canada our Metropolitan, The Most Reverend David Edwards and our Primate, The Right Reverend Shane Parker to ascertain contacts in the wider church. It is by broadening our horizons that we can better service our clergy and congregations. I also would develop relationships through the House of Bishops that are integral for the diversity of our diocese.

As my belief is to be inclusive, we would need to work with the LGBTQIA2S+ and or indigenous brothers and sisters. It will be through working with both groups that we can foster further development and growth.

Another part of our relationship building is included with how we develop ecumenical growth. It is through the working of our individual churches that we can better serve the world on an ecumenical level. This can be accomplished by working together, side by side for the enhancement of the church worldwide. Some common examples include how we work together through breakfast programs, Word of Prayer, special services throughout the year, events at our local schools, week of prayer for Christian Unity and bible studies. Social action can be utilized as well as we work on joint humanitarian projects and social justice as we witness many people who live in areas below the poverty level.

As we grow in including these many different groups, relationships are fostered and expanded. We can see how locally we can make a difference but also on a national and global level.