Report to Diocesan Council

Synod 2024 Table Discussions – "Green Sheet" Common Themes

After reviewing the content generated by the table discussions at Synod, we have noted a number of common themes. This is not question specific but more so a general overall summary of the ideas and thoughts that were brought forward during the synod discussions. This year's Synod had a palpable positive energy felt throughout the 2 days. There was a lot of positive feedback about sitting at discipleship tables and the opportunities to connect to other parishes.

The common themes we noted:

1. Strong desire for outreach and living the gospel of Christ
2. Disconnect between parishes and the Diocesan office and bishop
3. General lack of understanding of the "Business side" of the Diocese
4. Need more connection between parishes
5. Strong parish focus on saving themselves
6. Assumption that people in the pews know and understand what the diocese of Rupert's Land is and does
7. Questionable parish leadership
8. Thinking in silos
9. Save our building, our traditions, because of our memories and nostalgic connection to the stuff
10. Resistance to Change
11. Lack of understanding the Diocese organization and roles: bishop's role, the role of the diocese, the assorted other positions and committees – i.e. deaneries, archdeacons, bishops, …..
12. How is the diocese "cutting back" their budget when the CM&M is not coming in
13. CM&M - no consequences for not contributing

Diocesan Council Working Group:
Mary Aitken, Elizabeth Bonnett, Deb Buxton, Rev. John Dolloff, Ven. Karen Laldin, Rev. Paul Lampman and Bob Wedlake

November 2024

Actual responses from the Table Discussions Synod 20224

Transcribed word for word so grammar is rough in some areas, and some of the questions were not understood well.

Question 1: Do we need to restructure the diocese with amalgamations of parishes based on geography? If so: How? If no - Why?

Table 8

- Yes - daughter churches return home, property sold
- Talk to parishes first - see if there is an affinity
- There has to be a willingness to amalgamate in spirit
- Recognition of our common faith and purpose
- May be better to amalgamate churches with similar vision and programming
- Top decisions not wanted

Table 18

- IF this was our house, what would we do if we did not have enough money?
- HOW do we afford to live?
- How do we cut costs?
- What don't we need?
- New church development fund is smoke and mirrors
- Should this fund be used to create new types of churches not buildings
- Can we work with shared physical space?
- Examine human resources in our diocese to see how we can live within our means
- Amalgamating services and sharing buildings works in more populace areas. Not so much in remote like NW Ontario and Interlake.
- Use slides for hymns
- Use technology for bringing in music and hymns
- Utilize more volunteers for things we pay for
- Do away with provincial synod
- Find out what younger people want in their spiritual experience and to develop ways to provide it
- Make better use of our community infrastructure
- Use technology to collect $$
- Outreach- join livestream
- Use technology to reduce bishop's travel
- Bishop needs to be more pastoral and less administrative
- Fewer travel meetings with more action

Table 23

Yes - this should be done while considering other factors as well. For example:

- Population of the parishes
- Finances
- Remaining economic life of the structures
- Demographic in the parishes
- Sacred plots or cemeteries associated to the church
- Though based on geography, actual distance should be considered. In a case where churches are too far apart, more considerations should be taken
- What are the things they have in common rather than the differences

No table number

- Restructure - what does that mean?
- Do parishes communicate with each other- what happened in the past?
- Diocese- lobby the government and other agencies for support
- Diocese is imposing good by having churches talking to each other
- Geography - how many in the city? Sharing information with other churches
- Need a facilitator to work with churches to enhance the conversation- example St Lukes high or low?
- Parish leadership- connecting vestries - not protecting territory
- Issue of $$ - not to be tied to that change the mentality
- Look at history- what happened 40 years ago - restructuring may be easier
- St, Matthews - budget concerns - lay ministry teams, balanced budget
- St. Michaels - learn from this example

Question 2: How would you feel if Diocesan Council / the Bishop forces closures or amalgamations including your own parish?

Table 9

- I wouldn't like it. But years ago some churches started sharing congregations. United and Anglican for instance, Other churches are very used. Sharing spaces
- Shared space is important
- Harder in rural areas
- Sharing buildings - can churches share and transport seniors even in the city?
- Could they buy a bus? Which could be used for other charitable purposes.
- Joining churches together- but even then 30 people and hiring people to coordinate events
- Staffing is important - not enough priests. Staff evaluations
- But how do we have conversations/ communication re: Expectations
- Merging has challenges especially it is forced
- People have felt walked over when it was decreed from the bishop
- There was theoretically conversation but didn't fell like it.
- There are people who have disappeared altogether

- People get attached to their buildings etc., bringing sacred items from other places is a goal and it helped.
- Discussion regarding all these things.
- Suggestions of writing to apply for grants from other sources. Could there be a grant writer for the diocese to assist parishes to apply for grants
- There would be pain and anxiety. All options should be considered but do we need to cling to life just like a medical situation? Western medicine has been to lengthen life but what about quality?
- Needs another option- my church can close as long as there are other options
- So many people are stuck with material things
- Here in this diocese, there are at least 20 churches that will close by 2040. Then what will we do? Now what do we do?
- IF 1/3 of the churches are closed- then what will we do? How do we prepare? What needs to happen so we can prepare? Learn from each other on how to live with change?
- The young people don't like the structure. Maybe we need to give up some of the structure
- Feel a sense of loss- as if lost a family member or a house.
- Being forced by bishop makes it worse
- What about stakeholders? How to help them to move along.

Table 17

- Some would stop going
- Feel sad, grieve, anger, disappointment
- Pro-active - start to plan for the future
- Is essence - we do not want to get rid of our buildings

Table 27

- Heartbroken
- Find new ways to serve the community, if we lose the building
- So many family memories
- Such a loss for so many who depend on a parish - great sadness
- Acceptance: Accept the things we cannot change. GO forward with love and faith.

No Table Number

- If it needs to be done- fire away
- Full time clergy - if cannot afford - cut back
- Not every $ is spent righteously
- Not every reason is benign. Parish not understanding
- Wider church consciousness lacking
- Save $$ on daily expenses example efficiency appliances

Question 3: Are you able to discern why your parish in unable to meet its CM&M financial obligations?

Table 1:

- Selfishness - had $$ troubles for a long time then turned around with rentals revenue, Money spent on repairs and renovations to church. Fear of going back to previous situation. WE are a communion - if we can afford more, we should pay more.
- Unfortunate experience with new incumbent
    - funds taken and people leaving
    - 2ND New incumbent led to recovery but eventually left for full time position elsewhere- another blow
    - Gradually increasing CM&M to 60 % at present- challenging with ups and downs of leadership
    - Drops in giving membership
    - No one reason and now discerning new incumbent
- Income drops - but unwilling to cut expenses, especially paid ministry - Music
- Small congregation but sold building and now renting and able to meet our 12.5% CM&M. Fear of Change
- Diocese needs to better explain their role and benefits to parishes
- Need to discern future and explain why not meeting CM&M
- Need for discussion of how the Diocese will deal with the deficit. We are too separate when looking at finances.
- Can't cut your way t greatness, need to address the problem. We still keep doing the same thing for solutions
- Living in buildings from a more prosperous time. Unexpected exposes like boilers and roof
- Need for more creative use of church buildings- apartments, now-rentals- day cares
- Do we want change
- Need to grow congregations more people = more income
- Why aren't people attending church?

Table 10

- Congregation shrinking and aging – decreased population to donate and remaining congregants who are again are on a fixed income and unable to increase offerings.
- Aging infrastructure and increased costs and decreased ancillary income.
- People not donating to church because they're not seeing the congregation doing the work of the church - i.e. not serving the broader community and are instead donating to other charities and organizations
    - Our churches are spending a lot of human and financial energy maintaining buildings and historical ministries (that may or may not be serving the community well).
- Difficult to engage new congregants (especially young people) when a lot of ministry and involvement happens during traditional working hours.

- Young adults experience higher rates of poverty than ever before (and higher than seniors) so young people joining does not equal incredible donor streams.
- Lack of understanding what the Diocese and National Church does for the congregation, clergy and the community.

Table 15

- + Adding revenue generating projects (housing)
- - aging congregations, legacy givers passing away
- - cant afford the whole amount
- - Lack of volunteers to host fundraisers
- - Cost of living going up- Rise of housing costs
- - Change of income o the givers (retiring)
- - Small parish sizes
- - Needs of the community overshadow the needs of the diocese
- - New members may have different thoughts on giving- new members not necessarily financially stable to contribute to offering.
- -Building maintenance costs
- -competing priorities
- - Stretching our volunteers too far
- + Selling of buildings increasing ability to pay contribution but is not a sustainable revenue.
- - Expenses higher than revenue
- + Main source of revenue from grants so cant be used for expenses
- + Merging of parishes
- + Incorporating mission work as own entity
- _ Reduction of paid staff leads to higher need for volunteers
- + Adding renters
- _ Lack of awareness of what the funds are for or go towards- What do we get out of giving?
- _ Parochialism- parishes more concerned with its own survival and not with or aware of the larger church/diocese.
- + Parishes may be ablet o look more at/ offer gifts and talents when treasures are not so affluent
- + Look for opportunities for partnerships
- + Come out of our silos- working in silos

Table 20

- If we gave full 12%, could not continue salaries and important church ministries
- Some people don't pledge, they just give so we don't always know what we will have
- Our own parish budget is running a deficit
- How/ where can we get $$ for new ministry in our tight budgets? Often only choice feels like to use funds that should go to CM&M
- Why pay when there is no consequence to not paying?

- What are some parishes compelled to pay full or face disestablishment? If CM&M is supposed to be fair - all should face same consequences.

Tables 25 & 26

- Relationships have been significantly damaged with the diocese- our parish meets its obligations but does so grudgingly. Need to manage the relationships better
- We as parishes run as part time people. Should the diocese run as a part time enterprise as well?
- Should the executives take cuts in salaries?
- Is the 12-12.5% the correct number post COVD? How is this arrived at?
- People need a clearer vision for the diocese in order to garner support for same
- Diocesan focus should be on the parishes
- DO we need the Episcopate?
- Acknowledge parish deficits before setting your %age then build a budget
- Running out of wealthy donors- middle class and up
- Repairs to old buildings depleting funds
- Reduced revenue from falling attendance and reduced giving
- Increased inflation affecting parish revenues
- Impression that the Diocese (read Bishop) does not support. Isn't visible to parishes- The What have you done for me lately – effect.
- WE recognize that the diocese is the church and without the diocese, the parishes would not exist - BUT the diocese needs to recognize that a figure set in 2015 is no longer viable and needs to reformulate.

Question 4: What gifts from your parish are you willing to share with other parishes?

Table 2

- Shared Ministry (guidance on how / what worship looks like) Anglican and Lutherans
- Up to code kitchen (Christ Church in Selkirk) other small - medium sized events & St, Johns College
- Some salary support/ admin support (St. Johns)
- Report or accountability on why 12.5% not being sent. Communication vs other reasons
- Artistic resources (saint benedict's table) is terms of a creative or even logistic base
- Communication on what's going on from all circles. Rural and urban even though more urban activities may occur
- Shared speaking resources for when lay people may want / need to step up.
- Inter/ Multi church partnerships for a set time with the intent of sharing gifts and community
- ON OTHER ISSUES: HOW CAN WE FOSTER GRACE FILLED ACCOUNTABILITY BETWEEN DIOCESE COMMUNICATIONS AND ALL PARISHES

Table 11 & 14

- Unite with another congregation
- Providing space/ Share building
- Joint fundraising
- We need to be open to change/ accept the current situation
- Structures can be used / emphasized to work together (archdeaconries and deaneries_ getting to know each other- examples:
    - Joint easter vigil
    - Joint Lenten bible studies
    - Small groups parish then meet in larger groups
- Let's plan toward growth and not dying
- Mission together
- From scarcity to abundance
- Intentional about education - example: What is the diocese- Why we do things?
- Positive experiences give a story to tell- community building at a level bigger than a congregation
- Share positive things about the church to our families and wider community
- Mission to new-comers to Manitoba- adapt worship

Table 16

- Narrative budgeting skills (St. Thomas)
- Connections for obtaining food/ household items etc. (St. Thomas)
- Experience accessing Grants (St. Thomas)
- Speaking to Gods economy not humans' economy- spiritual gifts do translate into financial and social impacts (St. Thomas)
- Experience with collaborative ministry - St. Peter
- Social connections and community buildings- meal after worship every week- Good Shepherd
- Opening property for Farmers Market (St. Margarets)
- Providing welcome and practical assistance (food & Clothing) to people coming for medical treatment and other reasons (St, Mary Sioux Lookout)
- How to continue with worship, planning and operations without traditional human resources- St, Peter & St. Thomas
- Clothing Store - St. Albans Kenora- expertise in setting up and also congregate meal once/ week
- Identify which parishes are a good match to share gifts and expertise and resources
- Get rid of SILO mentality
- Reconsider structures and meetings- example- Synod on people's workdays and limits who can attend and therefore the voices we hear.

Table 24

- Our building and hall- assess rent amount
- Our parishioners and their gifts

- Staff/ clergy
- Rental for alternate services (denominations)
- Cemetery, historical buildings
- "Extra" Furnishings
- Share buildings and work cooperatively
- Fellowship events- (spaghetti supper, pancake supper)

Question 5: Do you think it is time for conversations with neighbouring dioceses within the prairies to talk about amalgamations? What would that look like?

Table 5

- Voluntary or forced?
- Cons:
    - Travel expenses
    - Smaller voice swallowed by big ones
    - Viability based on numbers and not personality
- Questions: What's the number of parishes that constitutes a diocese?
- What's the percentage of a parish income when its not viable to support a diocese budget
- Advantage:
    - Episcopal needs shared by more parishes
- Questions around the financial, legal, and spiritual authority of the various levels of the ecclesiastical structure and if what was established in Canada us currently viable?
- Reflects reality?
- Parish churches go beyond geographical parish
- People in pews not aware of what diocese of Ruperts land is/ does aside from what the bishop does
- Need for communication and education
- Transition- lack of leadership at parish level and many challenges until the Diocese stepped in with leadership
- Structure of Diocese is not meeting the needs of the parishes- i.e.: 4 % withdrawal is not enough to support renting elsewhere
- Lack of understanding of the Diocese of Ruperts Land, the Diocesan Council etc., unless synod
- Episcopal needs?
- Who owns the church buildings?
- Needs to parish level grass roots/ community revitalization as well directing input into Diocesan priorities

Table 14

- This diocese has already experienced this with Keewatin, not a longevity solution
- Before we start talking about amalgamations lets talk about local diocesan restructuring

- Acts 2: 1-4, 42-47: In keeping with this - lets commit to being rooted in the Trinity so that all such conversations/ decisions rise from that and are informed by that.

Table 19

- Any amalgamation would require massive changes in infrastructure
- Amalgamations within the prairies
    - Options: Hire more bishop suffragans (bishop assistant) to approve decisions
    - More power at a lower level
- Difficulty to access Diocesan office by remote areas
- More communications online) not face -to-face)
- Someone hired to simply answer questions
- Bishop to each church- i.e.: confirmations - in large amalgamations?
- Smaller amalgamations more feasible
- Different mindsets: Brandon to Thunder Bay, Thompson to US Border
- More territory for one bishop - burnout and travel
- Disconnect between parishes and Diocese greater) availability of bishop)
- Does amalgamation provide financial gain? (St. Francis amalgamated 3 parishes)
- Diocesan Teams- power at deanery level?

Table 21

- What is the cost benefit or spiritual benefit to amalgamate?
- Theres no harm in starting to talk with other dioceses
- We already amalgamated with Keewatin - how did that go?
    - What issues did it create?
      What solutions worked?
    - What did each party gain or lose?
- We need to consider both dioceses - logistics of being in a larger diocese, greater geography- greater expenses for clergy to travel
- Technology helps with communication
- Note - most of the clergy in the north are non-stipend basically volunteers - this needs to be remembered and changed
- Everyone is very protective of their own traditions / space and their place.

Question 6: Should Dioceses on the prairies look into merging or centralizing services: archives / payroll / property / legal matters?

Table 3

- Cost out using a payroll company- e.g. pay works (Manitoba)
- Centralization with Prairies could have benefits. What would the down side be?
- Centralize process to put archives into the cloud/ what would you do with the beautiful physical archives. Diocesan archives are different than parish archives
- The way legal matters are currently handled- going through the diocese- works well

- What about legal records- e.g.- baptisms etc.? How do we preserve these fragile books an documents?
- Property- can't see this
- Special attention needs to be paid to the archives of Indigenous People

Table 12

- Archives:
    - Centralized information would make things easier to find
    - Can store where right conditions, need to know where to find (textiles, photos)
    - Hiring one person with more hours make staffing easier to fill
    - Store digitally so all can gain access
    - Copies of lesser significance could be removed (Queen coronation)
- Payroll
    - Combining expert across all areas- employment equity
    - Would require expert who knows differences between payroll of different provinces assuming this is still issues vs employment seen in one province vs 3.
    - What about idea of payroll done nationally?
    - Online makes things so much easier
- Property:
    - Depends on what we are talking about
    - Is all merged – no need for property?
    - Snow most likely needs to be local
    - Specialized nice to share and nice to call when local church requires.
    - Centralized property management
    - IF selling- need someone who can sell across all properties
- Legal
    - Benefit of expert across all
    - Combines suits vs separately- legally perhaps more power
    - Centralized knowledge
    - Better regarding clergy misconduct

Table 20

- Yes look into it
- Property- not sure what could change since we already participate in national insurance
- Pros
    - Archives makes sense for the whole province
    - Archives would be better preserved in proper estorage
    - Perhaps legal $$ savings by retaining a legal firm for the whole province
    - Payroll duplication between diocese could be lessened by joining together, make an HR dept
    - Much of payroll wand benefits set up could be done by zoom or phone
- Cons:
    - Could take longer to access archives
    - Costly to create proper archive storage

    - Legal matters fell more tricky sonce local availability and familiarity with canons is helpful
    - Health care and some legal things are different between Ontario and Manitoba
    -
- Difficult to decide what property to stay in
- Strong will
- Could we find heart happy uses for sold property? Example: Congregations move to building A, building B becomes a food bank or other social service run by non-profits?

Table 27

- There should be a rural office

Question 7: Should we consider ecumenical mergers- sharing of buildings, services) with other religions - Note this is already happening.

Table 4 (difficult to read)

- Brandon/ Assiniboine Properties
    - Neepawa- Shared ACC /UCC
    - Manitou – Shared ACC /UCC
    - Swan River - Shared ACC /UCC
    - ??? St. Lukes now with St. Paul United and something else with St. George Brandon – all served by Anglican clergy
- Winnipeg shared ministry - 2-point charge
    - Crecent Fort Rouge and ?4Corydon, King and Gray St?
    - John Black and Immanual?
    - ? with Rosser
    - Cathedral - ????
- What is the goal of ecumenical mergers
    - Ministry growth?
      Filling buildings/ Paying bills? Mergers now toward thriving Anglican worship later?
    - The benefit of other denominations

Table 13

- Yes, but that's not the whole solution
- More combined services result but:
    - Money might not be split
    - Not all people went with the merger
    - Weare not stronger after merging
- Do we need to UNBRAND ourselves, so we think of ourselves as Christians first rather than Anglicans?
- We worship as Anglicans as a choice but outside the church we need to connect differently

- We do need to celebrate our identity, but we also must take responsibility for past actions.

Table 21

- Good options especially if 2 churches nearby and suffering same problems
- Everyone protective of their place
- Treat the new joint congregation as ecumenical
- Need to determine commonalities and discern the unique differences
- Flexibility
- What do we have to hold on to?
  What can we loosen?
- What can we let go?
- Strengthening the common threads

Table 22

- Yes
- Important to be able to maintain your identity while working in harmony: Example: St. Stevens & St. Bede worshipping at St, Mary's
- Safe space, no judgement, EG: Everyone needs to be listened too, heard with no judgement

Other:

Table 13

- How do we reverse the trend from death to life?
    - Focus on discipleship / evangelism. PEOPLE ARE THE CHURCH
    - Ww lose by merging / sliding as not all congregants remain
    - Church needs to change their being / philosophy for people to come back
        - More times and days for services in addition to Sunday
        - Online services do not replace fellowship

Items listed on big "post its" (not green sheets)

- Weekly afternoon of crafts and conversations groups- fellowship and hospitality for parishioners extend to wider community- some of which have attended weekly and maybe will attend Sunday at some point.
- Resources and good people to call