

# Forward Together

Report of the Cathedral Mission Statement Working  
Group

July 2017

## Background

In June 2016, the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador facilitated a workshop with the Cathedral congregation in the hopes of developing a parish “vision”. This workshop, which was attended by many, was the start of a process of mission articulation and development that has not been undertaken in an intentional and formal way within the parish in over a decade.

A report summarizing the Cathedral “visioning” session was presented by the Diocese to the Cathedral Vestry in October 2016. Though the summary of the “visioning” session was interesting, the Vestry was left with the question of what to do with the information. In response, the Vestry Rector Selection Subcommittee (which was originally established to work with the Diocesan Bishop to select a new Rector for the parish) was given an expanded mandate and tasked by Vestry to develop tangible mission/vision statement(s) for consideration by Vestry and the parish. The Subcommittee has been working towards a final mission statement since that time.

This effort was undertaken during one of the most uncertain times in recent parish history: the parish has been facing significant financial challenges and was without a Rector for a year, and the Diocesan Bishop has been actively building a closer relationship with the Cathedral. When the Subcommittee began its work, it quickly realized that developing a vision of “what we might become” or “what we might achieve” during this time of great uncertainty would be nearly impossible without first articulating a parish mission that accurately reflects “who we are”, “what we are about”, and “how we are different from others”. This period of uncertainty has been ideal for developing this mission as it has allowed many within the parish to take a very close look at why the parish is important to them and why the parish might be important to others – indeed, the Cathedral itself is built from broken rocks.

Early drafts of the mission statement were based on the commentary and themes heard during the June 2016 workshop. In January 2017, the Subcommittee facilitated a workshop with the Cathedral Vestry to gather feedback on a draft mission statement by addressing the question “What does the draft mission statement mean to you?” Following that workshop, the draft mission statement was revised to create a proposed mission statement that was brought to the congregation in February 2017. The congregation was also given the opportunity to provide feedback based upon the same question. Some members of the congregation responded in person, while others responded anonymously.

Based upon the feedback received from the congregation, the proposed mission statement was revised again. The final mission statement was presented to Vestry in June 2017 for potential adoption.

## Mission Statement

The final parish mission statement approved by the Cathedral Vestry in June 2017 is as follows.

*The mission of the Cathedral Parish of St. John the Baptist is to proclaim and celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ through worship, example, and action, recognizing its location in the heart of St. John’s and*

*its responsibility as the Cathedral of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. The Cathedral Parish will, by the Grace of God:*

- *Foster faith development in every person seeking to explore their relationship with God;*
- *Provide vibrant and liturgically-sound worship experiences that embrace its rich musical tradition and cathedral setting;*
- *Deliver ministry and outreach that meets people's needs;*
- *Preserve Anglican heritage and tradition of Newfoundland and Labrador and honour Anglican relationships to historic sites and events; and*
- *Facilitate Diocesan ministry reflected through the Cathedral.*

## **About the Mission Statement**

The Cathedral Mission Statement is meant to be a concise statement of “who we are”, “what we are about”, and “how we are different from others”. It is clear from the reactions and commentary received throughout the process that each of the key elements of the mission statement means something different to each person. This report does not try to present all the comments heard throughout the process, instead offers one interpretation of the mission statement distilled from the hundreds of comments heard throughout the process, in an attempt to make the statement more “real”.

## **Foster Faith Development**

*Foster faith development in every person seeking to explore their relationship with God.*

Everyone is somewhere on a faith journey – a journey that never ends and doesn't necessarily have a destination. Some, such as young children starting Sunday School or twenty-somethings raised in secular families, might be starting their faith journey; others, such as new parents who were confirmed as teens, might be restarting a journey where they left off; others, such as refugees and immigrants, may have recently gained the freedom to explore their faith openly; and others, such as those who have been worshipping in the same church for a lifetime, might be questioning long held beliefs as they prepare for retirement. Every one of these faith journeys is important, even if it doesn't result in someone accepting Jesus Christ as their saviour.

The Cathedral can, and should, play a role in faith journeys by supporting anyone who wants to actively explore their relationship with God, and also by encouraging others to start or restart their relationship. To do so, the Cathedral must be welcoming, inclusive, tolerant, open-minded, and accessible. The building must be open to the public, yet the parish must be present and active outside the building. Cathedral worship and activities must be sufficiently varied to help people connect in ways that are meaningful to them. The Cathedral must help feed those who are hungry, not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because it's hard for people to explore their faith when they haven't had a healthy meal in days. And, as members of the congregation, we must not be afraid to talk about our faith, and our struggles, both with each other and with those whom we meet.

## **Provide Worship Experiences**

*Provide vibrant and liturgically-sound worship experiences that embrace its rich musical tradition and*

*cathedral setting.*

Within the Anglican Church of Canada today, we are blessed to have a wide-variety of liturgies available for use, but in some cases these liturgies favour creativity over sound doctrine. For example, can we really “dwell in Him, and He in us” through the Eucharist if we haven’t first confessed our sins and received forgiveness?

Certainly, finding fresh ways to praise God through varied liturgy can have a positive impact by breaking the routine and helping connect with new people; yet, there are key elements of worship that shouldn’t be set aside for the sake of shortening a service or keeping the tone “upbeat”. Though Cathedral parishioners have long debated the merits of the *Book of Common Prayer* over the *Book of Alternative Services*, and vice-versa, our liturgy has always reflected sound doctrine – as we try new things in the future, it is important that our liturgy continue to reflect sound doctrine.

Much in the same way, the Cathedral is blessed to have a rich musical tradition. We have a long history of choral music and a grand organ that must be celebrated and showcased. But that doesn’t mean that we should allow ourselves to get “stuck in a musical rut” and do what we have always done. Even an orchestra benefits from playing contemporary pieces, featuring guest conductors, teaming up with a choir, and including the sound of a banjo from time to time. That being said, a tourist dropping in for a principal service at a cathedral probably wouldn’t be expecting Jazz Matins – but they might also be intimidated by a service in which they can’t sing along.

### **Deliver Ministry and Outreach**

*Deliver ministry and outreach that meets people’s needs.*

The gap between the wealthy and poor widens every day. Not long ago, panhandling in St. John’s was only “a Water Street thing”, but now there is poverty and suffering everywhere you turn. The 2016 Cathedral Open House was a Christmas blessing to many for whom a cup of soup and a small “Tim’s card” was a highlight of the season. There are many in our community struggling with housing, mental health, and addictions issues that the Cathedral can help, even if we can’t make their struggles go away. And we all know that we have vulnerable women, and men, being exploited as part of the sex trade on our very doorstep.

But these aren’t the only needs, and they aren’t confined to the downtown. Mental health and addictions struggles are as prevalent in CBS as they are downtown. The world around us is crying out for something to believe in other than the fact that working harder will make them happier and that the next new piece of technology will make them thinner or help them make new friends. And let’s not forget that the Cathedral Open House also meant a lot to many in our congregation for whom the Cathedral is their family.

The challenges are great, and we could always use more volunteers, but there is a lot the Cathedral can do if we let the Holy Spirit act through us. Especially, if we team up with other faiths and community partners.

## Preserve Heritage and Tradition

*Preserve Anglican heritage and tradition of Newfoundland and Labrador and honour Anglican relationships to historic sites and events.*

The parish is one of the oldest in North America. Past buildings have been burned to the ground through fires that destroyed the city. The Cathedral has municipal, provincial, and national heritage designations. Thousands of tourists visit every summer. An Ecclesiastical District plaque rests on the southwest corner of our stone wall. We are one of the few congregations in the country still using the *Book of Common Prayer* on a regular basis. The Church of England was one of the foundational churches associated with European settlement on the island, and the number of Anglican baptisms and marriages in Newfoundland and Labrador over the years is astounding. The Church Lads' Brigade supplied the headquarters for recruitment and training of the "first 500" members of the Newfoundland Regiment who volunteered for service during World War I, and the CLB flag still flies proudly in the South Transept of the Cathedral. Just to name a few of those traditions and events that we hold dear.

There is a lot of heritage and tradition to celebrate, and a lot of artifacts to preserve, but there is new history being made every day. Will we someday look back at the Anglican response to the Syrian refugee crisis of 2016? Or might one of our Sunday School children be a future Prime Minister of Canada?

## Enable Diocesan Ministry

*Facilitate Diocesan ministry reflected through the Cathedral.*

Sure, the Cathedral has always been the home of Diocesan services and receptions; but, in 2017, the Bishop and Cathedral have embarked on a new relationship. The Cathedral is now the worship home of the Bishop, and will soon be the administrative home. It is no longer "us" and "them", just a larger "us". The new "us" includes the Cathedral congregation, the Bishop, Synod Office, and the Archdeacons of Avalon, Trinity-Conception-Placentia, and Labrador. We are all one in Christ.

It is still a bit too early to know what this new relationship means, but as the "mother church" of the Diocese, the Cathedral is uniquely positioned to play a special role in the work of the entire Diocese. The Cathedral might operate a ministry initiated by the Bishop, provide space for the ministry of other metro parishes, or simply host a workshop to share our expertise. Regardless, the Cathedral must be prepared to answer the call and play a leadership role for the benefit of the entire Diocese.

## Next Steps

With a clearly articulated parish mission that accurately reflects "who we are", "what we are about", and "how we are different from others", the parish can now begin to develop a vision to reflect "what we might become" and "what we might achieve". It is hoped that the articulated mission will remain accurate for many years to come, thereby allowing a vision to be developed to reflect two, five, or even 10 years into the future.

Once vision statements are developed, the Cathedral Vestry and Executive can develop annual goals and objectives that achieve the vision, refreshing the vision periodically as required.

## **Acknowledgements**

As the Subcommittee fulfills its mandate through the delivery of this report, it would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the development of the mission statement in any way. Without people taking the time to attend workshops, prepare submissions, send emails, discern, and pray, it would not have been possible to develop this important cornerstone of the future of the parish.

Respectfully submitted,

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