

**Diocese of Algoma
Synod 2015**

Strategic Plan Sessions

Responses to questions generated from 20 table group discussions (an average of 8 participants per table) during the Synod plenary session. The summary was generated from a 1 hour question and answer session with the Strategic Plan Implementation Team on the afternoon of Thursday, May 7, 2015.

1. Table discussions in plenary session

Participants were asked to consider, discuss and scribe responses to the following 3 questions:

- **What message(s) would you want to send to the new Executive for next steps to follow after the Strategic Plan?**
- **What can you bring back to your parishes and your Deanery for next steps to follow up on the Strategic Plan?**
- **What in the course of the last five years in our work with the Strategic Plan has inspired your gratitude?**

2. Break out session - Question and Answer – May 7, 2015

- **Summary notes**

Note:

The Strategic Plan Implementation Team wishes to thank all participants for their active participation in our sessions. We are forwarding this document to Executive and all attendees at Synod 2015, as committed to during Synod.

We would also refer you to our full report that was distributed prior to Synod, particularly the subsections, “*What we've learned*” and “*Considerations for moving forward*” to complement the responses from Synod.

This Synod Feedback Report prepared by Celia Ross, Mary Richardson and Craig Hurst on behalf of the Strategic Plan Implementation Team.

June, 2015

Table responses:

What message(s) would you want to send to the new Executive for next steps to follow after the Strategic Plan?

Strategic Objective 1: Congregational Development

Continue the work

- There needs to be follow-up and continued work in this area (3)
- Keep the position of Congregational Development Officer (3)
- Support the position of Congregational Development Officer and equip the incumbent to do the job. We need the help.
- Keep Program Associates, perhaps reframing their role to ensure they are meeting Deanery needs (3)
- Continue the assessment process to help churches build enthusiasm, make realistic choices, focus on positive aspects, and help us get to work: 'boots on the ground'
- Have a representative (from the Deanery?) come to each parish to work with members of the parish
- Have all parishes finish the assessment process
- Be sure assessments for individual churches are compiled and distributed in a timely manner (3)

Training and Tools

- We need training and facilitation and perhaps mediation
- Develop tools to explain, equip and measure successful stewardship (including financial stewardship) (2)
- We need a reference team to get resources from

Communication

- Most people in this table cannot name the 7 clear recommendations, which shows work needs to be done on a local level to engage with the Strategic Plan (2)
- Share stories of good things that are happening across the Diocese
- Communicate what is working really well in a parish with other congregations in a way that is accessible and encouraging and specific (What exactly is it? How did they get it started? How has it been adapted with experience? Who can I talk to for help if I am interested?) (2)
- Make Strategic Plan simpler, easier to read and understand for parishioners; itemize, scale down (2)
- Local plans need to have wide discussion, celebrating successes, making concrete plans for the future, including who is doing it and by when. Don't try to do everything at once
- We need messages to be a message of power, not of fear
- Work with the parish and deanery
- Discuss at clericus, but not only clericus, so it won't be clergy-centered

Rationalization

- Implement the findings and recommendations
- Continue with the rationalizing process to optimize memberships
- Address grieving issues
- There will be fear and resistance
- Develop mechanisms for pooling resources
- Let us be more proactive in rationalization; combine congregations BEFORE all resources are used up; close churches BEFORE a crisis in resources, etc. (2)
- We may need church planting in certain areas: new congregations, innovations
- ‘Success’ and ‘health’ need to be broadened out to always include non-traditional ministries
- Suggest and promote simple, small steps for parishes to move forward with the plan
- Tell all the churches to work together; insist on collaboration
- Develop a measurement tool; how do we know these are successes?

Leadership

- The Executive needs to take leadership in the conversation on two fronts:
 - Changing culture requires change in our ministry structures and methods. Give us facts and ideas so we aren’t just doing the same thing while knowing that we need to prepare for something new.
 - If churches need to close their building in order to save the ministry, tell them and help them. Don’t let them struggle away with false expectations.
- Most people need to be asked; need to learn how to replace yourself
- Local churches and community needs have changed
- Open minds, open hearts, open doors
- Honesty is key
- Connect with other service agencies to work together (for example, Samaritan’s Purse)

Strategic Objective 2: Evangelism

Importance

- The main issue for follow-up is evangelism
- Look at how to inspire discipleship; how to help Anglicans be evangelical
- Look at how to inspire Christian renewal
- Define what a member of the church is? Are our standards fuzzy? Low?

Education and Training

- More training is needed especially on how to conduct outreach, evangelizing
- A good base of adult education is needed for evangelical worship
- Return to Cursillo and other movements to encourage and foster laity

Good practices

- Foster intentional hospitality, identifying, greeting and incorporating all people into church service and activities

Strategic Objective 3: Child and Youth Ministry

Facilitators and Coordinators

- Keep Child and Youth Facilitators, perhaps reframing their role (3)
- Positions are underfunded; without enough money to operate, they are not effective
- Program Associates and Youth Facilitators are paid positions. We cannot have a Youth volunteer Coordinator position and expect accountability. Need to address how to look at the whole thing and, if it is important, make it a budget item.

Organization

- Is it a one size fit all or should we look at what the needs are by Deanery
- Youth Facilitators need to be evaluated as to effectiveness; are they meeting the needs of each Deanery?
- One option would be that each Deanery should be granted the money and they would choose how the money is spent.
- Ensure adequate staffing, making sure roles don't overlap but also that there aren't gaps
- Clear description of roles needed to ensure they are meeting the needs of each Deanery (2)
- Sustain their programs with clear direction and oversight in the Deanery.
- Ensure the success of all programs with the proper level of support and guidance. (2)

Funding

- Maintain youth ministry budget
- Provide clearer information as to where money for youth development is being used

Role of youth

- Youth should be represented on on-going committees. The skills youth have need to be used.
- Continue great discussion over the role of youth and how to attract them to church
- Encourage youth involvement
- Provide mentorship for youth
- Provide leadership opportunities for youth
- More emphasis needed on youth
- Have two youth voices on the Executive Committee
- Engage with youth in intentional planning for what in Sunday worship will speak to them. Someone to explain things. Someone to help me relate it to my life.
- Recognize children and youth as integral to the body of Christ
- Develop a vision for child and youth ministry

Strategic Objective 4: Communication

Regular and timely

- Regular communication is absolutely key; keeps us inspired and working; encourage various different ways of communicating (4)
- Use more electronic communication to help with timeliness when distributing reports

Clear, helpful and easy to use

- Title questionnaires better and provide quick feedback after the response deadline
- Web page improvements have been helpful, but more work needs to be done
- Make sure the Diocesan website has links to lists of resources for churches; this is very helpful

Strategic Objective 5: Clergy and Lay Development

Clergy

- We need (ordained) ministers
- We need to have more priests working at more than 50% hours; better stipends needed too
- Clergy are missing supports to be able to do a good job; isolated by geography; missing tools (such as music)
- Clergy are spending too much time on administration
- It is good to have priests who have ‘lived in the real world’
- Look at use of lay ministry to enhance parish life where there is not a priest; lay ministries need to be encouraged
- Identify how ordained and lay ministries can be enhanced to work as teams
- Examine effective use of ‘manpower’; effective use of people who minister

Education and Training

- There is a need for funding to create more educational opportunities for the laity and clergy
- Clergy need to take advantage of the funding for professional development.
- Training of ministers is critical; how are we ‘feeding’ our clergy?
- Effective workshops for clergy (and lay readers) on preaching
- Promote on-line learning
- Promote the education of lay readers; support them in their gifts and abilities; encourage volunteers through support
- More resources and guidelines are required for adult education
- Need to equip lay people and clergy with the means to articulate what it means to be an Anglican
- A list of people to mentor wardens, lay readers and treasurers is needed; should be an ongoing function

Leadership

- Define what kind of leadership we are looking for
- What should the process of training for leadership look like?

Evaluation

- Clergy evaluation needs to be given more time.

Strategic Objective 6: Social Action through Mission

Everyone's mission

- We used to build churches as they are now doing in Tarime; will Tarime eventually go the same way as we have gone?
- Everyone who is baptized has a mission

Tools

- Incorporate more missional activities into our services (for example, the Bishop's film on Tarime) once in a while.
- Continue to foster inter-parish and inter-Deanery dialogue on tools to reach out to the community

Leadership

- Clergy are often over-stretched and leaders are finding it difficult to put energy into missional leadership and projects in the community as well as maintaining their parish

Strategic Objective 7: Worship

General

- What does inspiring Anglican worship mean? Suggest reforming the committee to deal with this.
- Promote focus on the Holy Spirit within the church community; focus on the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Objective 7 should be the cap stone objective because every other objective is liturgical, i.e., the work of the people.

Tools

- Congregations need tools, communication and support to be current and engaged (i.e., sheet music, links, CD's, etc.)

Services

- Incorporate the joy of praise
- Incorporate music relevant to the younger generation
- Incorporate alternate forms of service and worship from other churches, ethnic groups, etc. There is room for variety in our services, once in a while!
- Some congregations focus on the 60-minute Sunday service; 4 readings and 4 hymns and the liturgy, that leaves not much more than about 7 minutes for a sermon. Is that enough?

General

- Don't shelve the Strategic Plan; keep it in the forefront
- The Strategic Plan is a springboard to action for the future
- Use the plan to help us reach out to the congregations who are not actively engaged
- Should carry on with special committees in all areas (social justice, communication, etc.)
- Committees need to articulate to the people where to find resources
- Constant feed-back in key
- Mentorship is key
- Committees need to be engaged in helping people to do things
- Keep committing resources to this process (human, financial and spiritual)
- Keep the seven objectives, continue to encourage ministry around these seven objectives, and continue to support parishes with staff and resources
- Leaders need to meet and share ideas.
- Good communication of Diocesan resources
- Encourage new ideas, regardless of failures
- **Ask** what have been your greatest successes? What have been your failures and what did you learn?
- Every objective needs more time and work
- Loosen formalities around respecting 'turf'
- Take a serious look at lowering apportionment, getting more bang out of our buck, some fresh eyes on cost-cutting initiatives
- Continue financial and positive support to Deaneries and Parishes
- Revisit and revise our planning regularly

Table responses:

What can you bring back to your parishes and your Deanery for next steps to follow up on the Strategic Plan?

Respondents –

AFFIRMED THE NEED:

- To move beyond a survival mode;
- To discover the needs of their surrounding community;
- To be proactive linking the Church to the surrounding world;
- To challenge the status quo, take risks, experiment;
- To strengthen relations within the deanery and among deaneries;
- To be disciples in our parishes, deaneries, diocese, and beyond;
- To do more than just write cheques;
- To develop parish mission statements;
- To extend ecumenical relationships;
- To prioritize, building on strengths and identifying weaknesses;
- To be passionate remembering that empowerment comes from the Holy Spirit;
- To ask what we love that we can give up for what we love more;
- To include youth in worship, learning and outreach;
- To encourage congregants to express their ideas;
- To recognize resistance to change;
- To have fewer church buildings;
- To benefit from as much clergy leadership as is made available in parishes without full-time incumbents.

SUGGESTED THAT:

- The Report be carefully studied, perhaps using the Executive
- The Report be kept alive;
- Christian formation is needed for both children and parents;
- More teaching be included in parish council meetings;
- There be a follow-up on the Book Study;
- Workshops be held on spiritual growth;
- Attention be given to pastoral care;
- Youth ministry is about relationships, not programs;
- The role of a deanery is to integrate, assist and foster;
- Parishes that have not received their Assessment Reports are experiencing disappointment and a measure of disengagement;
- More lay people be involved in pastoral ministry;
- The main emphasis was on Congregational Development. Was that intended?;
- Tact and diplomacy are required in implementing the Plan;
- That we find out how many people have actually read the Plan. Re-introduction may be necessary;
- The OBJECTIVES PLAQUE be displayed, if not already done;
- The Objectives of the Plan be posted.

REQUESTED THAT:

- A digest of the Report for parish use;
- Definitions of *missional, authentic, discipleship, evangelism*;
- Help digesting the Report ;
- Ideas for connecting with the community;
- “How tos” for reaching the unchurched including those in our own families;
- More on-line presence, parish, deanery, and diocese;
- Ideas for advertising ourselves in the community and finding entry points;
- Help in evaluating things that cannot be measured;
- More education for clergy and laity regarding the Plan.

Table responses:

What in the course of the last five years in our work with the Strategic Plan has inspired your gratitude?

General:

- Let's start focusing on qualitative things - how lives have been changed. We hear great stories of success and learn from failures;
- Excitement for the possibilities;
- Include this question on Parish Report; "What are you most grateful for this past year?"
- We hear less of, "We have always done it this way."
- We are grateful for the people who have worked so hard;
- Congregational development support via Jay and the A-Teams;
- Identifying 7 areas of church life gave us the opportunity to have a common language with other parishes, to encourage on another better;
- Communication through common language and electronic opportunities;
- Positive way it was handled;
- Looking to the future, not behind;
- Presented in a non-threatening way;
- Everyone was given a chance to participate;
- Opened peoples' minds to the idea that they do have a voice;
- Has given us the impetus to take action;
- Has taught us to be open to change;
- This has made us look not only at ourselves (inside), but how we can be more inclusive in our community (outside);
- Appreciation and acknowledgement of making changes in our church buildings;
- Sensitivity in helping people look at their church building and its needs;
- Appreciate de-emphasis on building and more emphasis on mission and outreach;
- Appreciate book study;
- Appreciate the assessment process. Helped identify strengths and gifts of people in the congregation;
- Positive expectations that are encouraging for congregations;
- Plan for the future. Sense of vibrant future;
- Permission to think about and implement change;
- Our old church closed; our new home has deeper spiritual feeling for me and my family;
- We were able to reassess our church building and close it;
- Grateful we are still where we are in our building, in spite of fire code challenges. We can carry on doing the work we do serving the inner city. We are more outward looking;
- Helped us define what we needed to do the work God is calling us to do and determine what that is;
- Helped us to see what we are doing well and concentrate on that;
- People are taking a realistic look at who they are and what they are able to do and looking out into the community;

- The Committee has tried to involve lots of people and have not 'rammed' their information on to us;
- The Committee is listening to us;
- Each Advisory Board member is asked to put on a workshop, the cost of which is an item for the Food Bank. My gratitude is for how many new people that has brought to us;
- Result of "Food For The Soul". Many new members have taken on a leadership role;
- We are becoming more outward, rather than inward looking;
- The whole assessment process has made us realize that we are not alone in our frustrations. We are thankful to be able to share them with others;
- Some are thankful for growing children's ministries that came out of information from the Strategic Plan;
- Grateful they are taking seriously, the queries of our church;
- Preparation for changes that are going to happen in the future;
- Things that we might not have been grateful for; you brought to light;
- Taken assessment of what we do "do";
- The framework of the Plan and the assessment process;
- Work and ministry of Jay Koyle;
- Placing of Deanery Program Associates and youth workers. Helpful in deanery activities and educational events;
- The Strategic Plan has helped our parishes look into the communities in which we serve and identify the needs of the community;
- It has given us better insights into ourselves and identified our strengths;
- Joy. It's all about relationships and all other parts come back to relationships; connections are what matters;
- Breaking open broken pieces that can now be seen and worked on;
- Feedback that brings back success and inspires more dedication and commitment;
- Mentoring and inspiring others;
- Finding excitement in failure. We have been given grace to fail and strength to continue;
- Mutual encouragement;
- Sharing stories of success with congregations and other parishes;
- Educating our parishioners about what we are doing and why we are doing it;
- Relationship building with parishes. Trusting each other and being open to change;
- That it's OK if something doesn't work the first time;
- Realizing that growth is a process needing patience and perseverance;
- Having to look at demographics;
- More open communication between clergy and the people;
- Open congregation to congregation communication and working together;
- Opportunity to see new gifts and talents of people;
- Multi-point parishes worshipping together;
- Being aware of new possibilities;
- Some very encouraging words with new ideas from "new eyes";
- Opening our eyes to the idea that walls are not the church;
- Strategic Plan and info was widely distributed and kudos to Jay;

- Extended deadlines for work and recognizing the importance of the Congregational Development Officer. (In the future, do we need a team rather than one individual?)
- Jay's presentations that lead to grassroots conversation and the development of core values;
- Grateful for the Core Values as motivation for work at local level;
- Grateful for the Core Values inspiring positive feelings at local parishes;
- Grateful this was not "top down", and allowed for individuality;
- Focus of the Implementation Team;
- Establishment of video conferencing (webinars);
- Strategic Plan has given individual parishes more focus;
- Some thought the Assessment Process was excellent. Others disagreed;
- The provision of a venue to discuss important issues with the whole congregation;
- Having a Plan at all!
- For the work of Jay Koyle, for his optimism and enthusiasm. He is very energetic and positive;
- The Implementation Team is to be commended for their monumental effort;
- That it has brought the diocese together (unified the diocese) under a common umbrella;
- The process caused our parishes to look at ourselves in a way in which we might not otherwise looked at ourselves;
- The time and effort expended to do this by all involved;
- Looking back at youth and bringing them back in;
- It is a communication;
- We have a written report to refer to, and a way to measure;
- It is something practical;
- The diocesan leadership wants us to be successful;
- We have people like Jay to guide us;
- More collegiality;
- Has inspired us -- we have to make changes.

Thursday, May 7, 2015
1-hour Question and Answer break-out session on the Strategic Plan
with the Strategic Plan Implementation Team

Summary notes

Question: *Where is my church's Assessment Review?*

- Summaries reporting the basic findings of each congregation's assessment process were completed and distributed in early 2014 for all congregations that had finished the process and submitted their materials by the beginning of 2014.
- The larger review document was not a requirement of the Strategic Plan, but rather an initiative undertaken by the Congregational Development Officer to provide greater support to congregations. It serves as a supplement to the summary report, deanery presentations on interpreting assessment findings, and individual consultations that have taken place with most congregations. The review is a much more extensive document, involving extra research and attempting to provide specific strategies relevant to the particular congregation. As a result, it takes more time to complete. Since May 2014, reviews are being distributed on an ongoing basis.
- Representatives from some congregations that have received their assessment review commented that it was proving to be a helpful document and gave examples of ways in which they are acting on its insights and recommendations.

Question: *Why did a 5-year Strategic Plan get spun into a 7-year process? Is the end in sight?*

- The Plan has not been extended to be a 7-year process. Rather, it became apparent over the five year period of the Plan that many of its initiatives were actions that must become an ongoing part our life as a Diocese if we are to be a vibrant and faithful church.

Strategic Objective 3: Child and Youth

- A good thing to have moved to a Deanery-based model rather than a Diocese-based model.
- Several people expressed a concern about 'one-size fits all' for each Deanery. The youth have also expressed concern about this approach.
- Several people commented on the woeful underfunding of youth facilitators (13 hours per week at minimum wage). Particularly given the few hours of work per week, facilitators should not be expected to cover a whole Deanery.
- Concern was expressed around the heavy reliance on volunteers (all Coordinators are volunteers).
- We need to define better what the Facilitators' and Coordinators' jobs consist of; at present, they have a tendency to do each other's work. A more thorough job description might show that the facilitators are being expected to do more than is possible in the allotted time.

- One youth facilitator commented that she feels stifled by her title and her mandate. She wants to be able to go into a church and help the congregation to decide what to do. She wants to be able to talk to the whole of each congregation. She feels excited about the potential.
- We might consider asking the Youth Facilitators to organize vacation Bible Schools.
- All Saints', Huntsville, offers once-a-month family services in a format that work very well.
- When in doubt, listen to the youth. Hold meetings at times convenient for their schedules and involve them at all levels in church life.

Strategic Objective 2: Evangelism

- Within the Deaneries parishes are gifted differently.
- We need to talk about evangelizing and church planting in new communities where there is need.
- We need an open church, and a church where newcomers feel safe. We need new, non-mainstream outreach programs.
- Prayer meetings can be an opportunity to experience the reality of the Holy Spirit. This is life-changing and a way to grow our community as God's church. Go back to the beginnings of the Christian Church. Introduce the workings and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Re-invite the Holy Spirit.
- Recognize our love of celebrations. Celebrate encouraging events. Celebrate our strengths. Identify 'growing edges' and grow from there.
- Take action so that this report (and other similar reports) do not gather dust.
- Move from procedures and representation to where the Spirit leads. Follow the energy. Put resources where the energy is.