

Response to the Bishop's Charge
138th Diocesan Synod of Fredericton
November 5, 2022

Delivered by Connor DeMerchant

Archbishop, Fellow members of Synod, Guests and Observers:

I want to begin, by thanking you Archbishop David for your leadership, prayer and counsel, particularly during the past few years. These have been difficult and challenging, and we have been grateful for your steadfast and transparent leadership during this time.

As we look ahead, we know that the future of the diocese will not look like our past. It cannot. We have been changed and impacted. Thank you for being honest with us, as difficult as this might have been.

Reflecting on what was shared from across our discussion groups this morning, there was agreement that

- we are being invited to take time to deepen our faith through reading and listening to Scripture, praying together and listening to the Holy Spirit;
- we are not meant to be just people who meet for an hour once a week. We are called to live-life together – for God, each other and those outside us;
- we need to consider how our buildings support our church's mission or hinders it;
- we know that we are better together and yet we long for and miss those who are not there any more – how do we reclaim what it truly means to be community?

Going forward, we are being challenged.

- Thank you that you continue to call us to be risk-takers and support us when we do;
- How do we connect with and reconnect with ALL generations? We need to have all ages together if we are to really live and thrive;
- How do we strengthen our personal and corporate discipleship? We need to learn how to discern together as well. Thank you for helping us and being willing to lead us through this.
- We know that we cannot expect the rhythms and norms in the parishes to continue in the same way.

We are asking for your continued guidance and support.

- Leadership in our parishes is a very real challenge – both lay and ordained. We need support and help in training and forming our leaders.
- Our structures and systems can be distractions from the mission of the Church – how can the business of the Church be done with fewer people and simpler? We are more than a business.
- We need frameworks and models for parish discernment.

- We need to be together more – it has, understandably, been too long. How can we commit to supporting each other better?
- How do we reconnect with the communities around us? How do we become beacons of hope?

The future of the diocese will take all of us. It will take time, it will be uncomfortable – however, we have renewed hope! It is not one or two of us, working it out alone in our remote parish. We have each other to encourage, support and challenge.

Our hope is in Christ alone! “Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39) This is the hope we cling to.

Response Team:

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