

Vision 2019 Committee Report

Draft for discussion

November, 2009

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vision 2019 sets out a strategic plan for the Anglican Church of Canada from 2010 to 2019, as mandated by the Council of General Synod (COGS). The six-member 2019 Vision 2019 Task Force, chaired by Dean Peter Elliott, met throughout 2008 and 2009 to guide the process with the help of a General Synod communications staff team.

The task force named four value statements that shaped their Vision 2019 work:

- We are on a spiritual journey together, trusting in Jesus Christ
- We hear the voice of God through the voices of God's people
- We value and celebrate the diversity of voices and perspectives within the ACC
- We proceed boldly, with confidence in God's grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit

Quantitative analysis

A sub-committee of the task force gathered a statistical snapshot of the church. Their findings were that the Anglican Church of Canada's infrastructure and overhead costs continue to grow while membership and revenues continue to decline.

Qualitative analysis

To engage a broad range of Canadian Anglicans in thinking about the future of the church, the task force established a creative and participatory process, whereby all were invited to answer the two-part question, "Where is your church now, and where do you want the Anglican Church of Canada to be in 2019?" Answers could be submitted by email, video, voice message, letter, or fax.

The communications team widely promoted Vision 2019 to encourage responses from across the church. A mission study around the Five Marks of Mission was presented to stimulate input. The marketing ranged from posters to directly contacting Anglican groups (Anglican Church Women, Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, etc.). 1,009 responses were gathered in total.

General Synod hired the consulting firm Marleen Morris and Associates to analyze this data. Using qualitative analysis software, Ms. Morris identified eight themes that emerged organically: young people and young families in the church, inclusiveness, tradition in the church, worship, outreach, new energy and ideas, growth and decline in the church, and handling differences in the church. Ms. Morris also examined the data through the lens of the Marks of Mission and found good evidence for their support.

From 28-30 October 2009, the Vision 2019 Task Force met for a final analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data. Operating from discussion and prayer they refined

these proposed strategic directions for the Anglican Church of Canada to strive towards by 2019:

- A welcoming, diverse, and inclusive church
- A church engaged in mission
- A church that reclaims the depth and breadth of Anglicanism
- A church with the organizational capacity to be faithful and effective

The task force also outlined 19 specific action steps that need to be taken in order for the Anglican Church of Canada to achieve these proposed strategic directions.

2. INTRODUCTION

A. History of planning in the Anglican Church of Canada

Vision 2019 sets out a strategic plan for the Anglican Church of Canada's work from 2010 to 2019. It was mandated by a resolution at the November 2007 meeting of COGS.

Since its formation with the Solemn Declaration of 1893, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada has occasionally paused to turn a lens on itself to determine where it is and where it wants to be. While the organizational reviews have followed a different format, each has tried to respond to similar questions: What are the needs of the church and its members? What are our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities? What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do as a church?

The resulting strategic plans have traditionally marked both a starting point and a destination for a journey that can take the church to new places.

i. Netten Report

Released in 1967, the *Netten Report* reviewed the functions and operations of key national church bureaucracies (missions, social service and religious education) and recommended that they be reorganized. The report called for a structure that was conducive "to the serving of the total mission of the church." Its recommendations led to the streamlining of 28 General Synod committees and commissions into only four standing committees.

ii. Preparing the Way

In 1992, the church began its strategic plan for the period of 1995 to 2004. Over three years, representatives from the National Executive Committee (COGS's predecessor) asked various groups, "What is important to you about the church? What is God calling us to do as a church?" They heard widespread concern about the church's dwindling numbers and a decrease in funds available to the national church. The resulting plan, *Preparing the Way*, directed General Synod to concentrate on what it could do best: nurturing and building overseas partnerships, advocating for social justice issues, providing information and financial services to

dioceses, developing ecumenical relationships with other churches and clarifying Anglican identity. Using the principle that local work is best done locally, programs such as congregational development and stewardship education were shifted back to dioceses.

iii. **Stained Glass, Sweet Grass**

In 2001, General Synod again decided to take the pulse of the church through an “intentional listening process” before the next national meeting in 2004. Environics Research Group was hired to conduct a qualitative research study that included an intentional listening process with 11 focus groups and a telephone survey of 1,062 randomly selected Anglicans. Results were presented in the 2002 book, *Stained Glass, Sweet Grass, Hosannas & Songs*. As was noted in *Preparing the Way*, laity were concerned about the challenges of declining church attendance, aging congregations and “competition” from evangelical churches. Respondents also registered anxiety about litigation regarding native residential schools and the debate over the role of gays and lesbians in the church. Both clergy and laity expressed a need for communications, leadership and vision from a national church that they felt was often “out of touch” with their needs.

iv. **The Framework: Serving God’s World, Strengthening the Church**

In 2003, as *Preparing the Way* was reaching the end of its mandate, COGS began a period of consultation with dioceses to develop a new plan. *Serving God’s World, Strengthening the Church* became the “framework” that guided the work of the church from 2004 to 2010. The framework began with the premise, “We envision a church that is growing in membership, faith and service in God’s world” and recommended that the core mission identified in the 1995 strategic plan continue for the next six years. After hearing that many dioceses missed the services that the national church had downloaded to them with *Preparing the Way*, the plan proposed adding new programs such as congregational development, stewardship education, youth ministry, and leadership development. The new initiatives, however, would only be added as resources became available through an accompanying stewardship plan entitled *Letting Down the Nets*.

B. Vision 2019: background

To launch the next strategic planning process for 2010 to 2019, the general secretary first placed an advertisement in the *Anglican Journal*, calling for volunteers with specific skills and experience.

Six members were selected: Archdeacon Janet Griffith Johnson (Montreal), Wayne Barnes (Niagara), Paul Goulet (Toronto), the Rev. Susan Titterington (Yukon), and Bishop John Chapman (Ottawa, corresponding member). Chaired by the Very Rev. Peter Elliott (New Westminster), the task force first met in March 2008. Executive staff support came initially from Archdeacon Michael Pollesel (general secretary) and Margaret Shawyer (coordinator of General Synod planning).

The Vision 2019 Task Force was instructed to work with the church's Planning and Agenda Team, a group that monitors and coordinates national work, and the Governance Working Group, a body that is reviewing the governance of the General Synod. The church instructed the task force to prepare a draft plan by February 2010 for approval by COGS; if approved, the plan will be presented to General Synod in June 2010.

The task force enlisted the help of General Synod communications staff: Lisa Barry (senior producer, Anglican Video), Brian Bukowski (web manager), Beverley Murphy (manager of circulation, distribution and information systems, *Anglican Journal*), and Ali Symons (communications assistant/web writer).

The communications team's work was informed by the success of the 2008 Amazing Grace Project, which invited Canadian Anglicans to film themselves singing "Amazing Grace" for inclusion in a compilation documentary. More than 500 groups participated, and an optional fundraising component raised over \$100,000 for a suicide prevention program in Canada's north.

3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

A sub-committee of the Vision 2019 task force set out to gather a statistical snapshot of the Anglican Church of Canada. The rationale for their work was that before planning for the future, the church needed to get a picture of where it is now and where it has been. Data was collected from the church's own records, Statistics Canada, and the Episcopal Church (TEC).

The sub-committee found that Canadian religious life has transformed over the past several decades. Regular church attendance declined from 35% to 21% between 1985 and 2005. The non-attendance ratio increased from 22% in 1985 to 33% in 2005. Those with religious affiliation showed a greater decline in non-attendance, increasing from 24% in 1985 to 41% in 2005. Overall, church attendance decreased from 67% of the population attending in 1946 to 20% in 2001. Those who avowed no religious status increased from less than 1% in 1971 to 16% in 2001.

Despite this shift, the majority of Canadians attend church at least once per year, 27% of non-attendees engage in some form of weekly religious practice at home, and 44% of Canadians still place a high importance on religion in their lives.

The sub-committee noted that a major element of these church trends is a decrease in Protestant immigration. In Canada, 37% of all immigrants in the 1970s were Protestant, but this had slipped to 11% of all immigrants by 2001. The visible minority population share increased 27% between 2001 and 2006—five times faster than the general population.

Statistics on the Anglican Church of Canada align with this trend of decline: in 1961 there were 1.3 million Anglicans on church rolls, and in 2001 this number had decreased to 651,000.

To get an even more precise picture of the Anglican Church of Canada's statistics, the sub-committee examined 2002-2008 data from seven representative dioceses: Western Newfoundland, Fredericton, Moosonee, Toronto, Edmonton, New Westminster, and Yukon.

Overall, these were the findings:

- *Givers* - **12%**
- *Parish members* - **19%**
- *Baptisms* - **26%**
- *Confirmations* - **26%**
- *Parish income* + **7%**
- *Number of clergy* + **10%**

The sub-committee also examined statistics across the church and found that:

- *Anglican Journal circulation* - **33%** (over 15 years)
- *General Synod income (97 to 08)* - **42%** (deficits 8 out of 10 years)
- *Number of bishops (all dioceses)* + **4%**

Between 1975 and 2009, the average active clergy population per year increased from 2800 to 3900 (a net gain of 1100) including an addition of 850 active women clergy (plus 220 retired men). In 2009, 60% of total clergy are active and 40% are retired. The overall increase may suggest an increased level of professionalization of clergy and increased ministry training.

In the United States, The Episcopal Church (TEC) is experiencing a similar trend, although in a more Christian context (43% of Americans go to church, compared to 20% of Canadians). TEC, which keeps more detailed statistics than the ACC, loses 19,000 members, the equivalent of one diocese, per year. Parish financial stress is significant and growing, from 44% in 2000 to 67% in 2008. Twenty-six percent of parishes said their memberships were growing, whereas 43% were declining. Fifty-six percent reported declining weekly attendance compared to 18% growing. As well, TEC accrued a 50% loss of "cradle" Episcopalians.

The Vision 2019 sub-committee observed that overall, the Anglican Church of Canada's infrastructure and overhead costs continue to grow, while membership and revenues continue to decline.

4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A. Methodology

Drawing on the creativity and participatory nature of the Amazing Grace Project, the communications staff formulated an open-ended question to ask Canadian Anglicans: “Where is your church now, and where do you want the Anglican Church of Canada to be in 2019?”

The question, according to the Vision 2019 team, was deliberately left open-ended in order to give respondents the opportunity to respond “from the heart” and to encourage anecdotal responses beyond just “yes” or “no.” In contrast with many survey models that are hierarchical, the task force and staff designed a “flatter” polling model, actively inviting everyone to respond. By doing so, they hoped to open the process to the whole church and make the survey more democratic.

The Vision 2019 team also opened up many means of participation. Respondents were invited to tell their stories by letter, email, video, or by leaving a voice message at a toll-free number. Inviting responses in different media was one way of igniting creativity and imagination.

At the start of the project, General Synod leadership suggested that the Five Marks of Mission, promoted by the Anglican Communion, be presented as a launching pad to help people reflect on the Vision 2019 question. The Five Marks are:

- To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

General Synod staff prepared a Five Marks mission study for use in parishes throughout Lent 2009. The study, downloaded by 1,784 people, encouraged Canadian Anglicans to reflect broadly about mission, then send in their answers to the Vision 2019 question.

B. Encouraging wide participation

Many other media were employed to promote Vision 2019. Staff used General Synod’s vehicles of communication, including web stories on anglican.ca, and articles in the church’s email newsletter. Staff sought cooperation and coverage from diocesan newspapers and encouraged churches to mark “Vision 2019 Sundays,” June 7 and September 13, when parishioners could submit their Vision 2019 responses. Promotional posters were sent to every parish and staff produced YouTube videos, postcards and bulletin inserts to accompany this campaign.

The Vision 2019 team solicited responses from a wide range of respondents, including individuals, parishes, Sunday Schools, youth groups, theological schools, diocesan and provincial synods. Staff requested responses from the House of Bishops and COGS members, and designed an insert in the Pensions mailing to reach retired clergy and laity. The Primate wrote to every retired bishop, asking for their reflections, and the general secretary wrote to every chair of standing committees, asking for their input.

Invitations were also issued to Anglican Church Women, the Mother's Union Canada, the Military Ordinariate, the Council of the North, Anglican Essentials, Integrity, the Church Army, Anglican Renewal Ministries, the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer and the staff of General Synod.

The Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) agreed to allow the work of the August 2009 Sacred Circle, the national Indigenous gathering, to be included. This work gathered reflections from over 180 Indigenous Anglicans, who came from across Canada and contributed in many languages.

During this eight-month process, the Vision 2019 team carefully monitored the breadth of responses across dioceses. In order to ensure good participation across the country, staff undertook an informal phone and email campaign where they personally contacted hundreds of parishes with an invitation to participate.

In total, the Vision 2019 planning team received 1,009 contributions, including 774 individual responses, 66 parish responses, 4 group responses, and 165 comments on the website posts. All dioceses were represented.

The responses ranged from brief telephone messages and short handwritten letters to slick videos, from lengthy letters to simple collages by Sunday school classes. Submissions were made public via the General Synod website, and website visitors were invited to comment on the submissions, thereby turning the exercise into a broad dialogue.

C. Analysis of qualitative data

General Synod hired Marleen Morris & Associates, a Vancouver-based consulting firm, to synthesize and analyze the responses as they were submitted.

Calling Vision 2019 a "remarkable undertaking," Marleen Morris performed qualitative analysis on the 1,009 responses using specialized software, NVivo 8. Her team coded each of the responses by theme, and then observed the clusters that emerged. Ms. Morris employed two means of data analysis: qualitative template analysis, where themes emerged organically from the grassroots, and content analysis, where data was examined through the lens of the Five Marks of Mission.

From the qualitative template analysis, eight themes emerged in the Vision 2019 responses:

- young people and young families in the church
- inclusiveness
- tradition in the church
- worship
- outreach to the local community
- new energy and ideas
- growth and decline in the church
- handling differences in the church

When the Vision 2019 responses were examined through the Marks of Mission lens, it became clear that that many Canadian Anglicans supported the ideas behind the marks, although they may not know about the marks themselves. All of the Marks of Mission appeared in the data, although the fifth mark—“safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”—was less prominent.

5. PROPOSED STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR GENERAL SYNOD’S MINISTRY: 2010-2019

Between 28-30 October 2009, the Vision 2019 Task Force met to examine the quantitative and qualitative analysis and to discern future steps for the Anglican Church of Canada.

They stated that their discussion was shaped by these values:

- We are on a spiritual journey together, trusting in Jesus Christ
- We hear the voice of God through the voices of God’s people
- We value and celebrate the diversity of voices and perspectives within the ACC
- We proceed boldly, with confidence in God’s grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit

After close examination and prayer, they outlined these proposed strategic directions for General Synod’s ministry, based on three clusters identified by Ms. Morris, with an additional cluster added to focus on implementation.

By 2019 the Anglican Church of Canada will be

A. A welcoming, inclusive, and diverse church

The witness of Scripture discloses a God both orderly and surprising. God invites peoples into a covenant, calling them to govern their common life according to God's order. At the same time, scripture is enriched with narrative describing God's transgressing of barriers and boundaries that had seemed to be grounded in God's sovereign will.

Jesus' encounter with the Syrophenecian woman (Mark 7), his parable of a good Samaritan, and his table fellowship with sinners and tax collectors (Luke 15) all suggest an ethic substantially unconstrained by common wisdom about belonging and exclusion. In fact, God's function in scripture is more about novelty than about stability. God is an innovator who describes himself repeatedly as doing a new thing, the sort of thing that will (Jeremiah 19, 1 Samuel 13) make the ears of those who hear it tingle.

A substantial dimension of that innovation has to do with God's apparent inattention to boundaries in inviting persons into his great work. Jesus himself points to Naaman and the widow of Zarephath in his sermon at Nazareth (Luke 4), and there are many others—from Rahab to the centurion convert—who do not belong to the identified inside group, but who play vital roles in the dramatic initiatives by which God seeks the transformation of God's world.

Action items:

- i. Strengthen the presence of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) online by developing a virtual Anglican community that would engage people (spiritual seekers as well as new, active and inactive Anglicans) and provide a platform for communities of practice to connect and act collectively across distances.
- ii. Work with Indigenous Anglicans in support of their journey towards self-determination and the resolution of justice issues including land, language, truth and reconciliation, poverty, culture, and non-stipendiary ministry.
- iii. Ask diocesan bishops to lead a renewal of Anglican worship by encouraging experimentation in liturgical forms and music, drawing on alternative sources—Celtic, Indigenous, and others—and to share best practices through the national platform.
- iv. Increase the ACC's public profile on social justice, making clear that, in policy and action, we are a diverse and inclusive church that welcomes and supports people regardless of their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

v. Dedicate two consecutive triennia to a concerted effort to attract and provide ministry to youth and young families. Build on and expand successful youth initiatives, including justice camps, follow-ups to Generation 2008, Ask and Imagine, etc.

vi. Invite and support parishes to engage in action research to share their experiences of being a welcoming, inclusive and diverse church. Collect both qualitative information (experiences and stories) and quantitative data (statistics) that could help other parishes engage in initiatives in this area.

B. A church engaged in mission

"Mission goes out from God. Mission is God's way of loving and saving the world..." (Lambeth Conference 1998, Section II, p121).

One way of understanding the pre-exilic warnings of the prophets is in terms of a failure to engage in the "mission that goes out from God", as religious leaders and secular elites turned instead to other agenda. The betrayal of God's justice for widows and orphans, for the poor and for the stranger, lies at the heart of the prophetic indictment.

The prophetic witness was clear: A return to covenant participation in God's mission would renew the life of Judah, and continued ritual activity divorced from God's mission of justice would bring a day of darkness and not light. (Amos 5).

A renewed focus on God's defining mission, on God's way of loving and serving the world, will recall us to our founding vocation in God's primordial garden—"to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2.15) and ground us in the creation's eschatological hope as it "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God". (Romans 8.19)

Our redemption in Christ is a redemption that includes the redemption of our purpose, of our partnership with God in God's mission—God's way of loving and serving the world.

Action items:

i. Following the adoption of the Five Marks of Mission at General Synod, the ACC will develop a strategy for education, advocacy, and action to enable the church to live more fully into these commitments.

ii. Establish a pilot project to assist and support parishes that have a desire to sell church buildings and reinvest the proceeds in mission-related projects, while ensuring they are supported in continuing their communal worship life.

iii. Continue to explore and support potential collaboration with ecumenical partners—particularly the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)—at both the national and local levels.

iv. Reintegrate the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) into the General Synod and transfer the core functions of Partnerships to PWRDF. Explore opportunities for partnership with Canadian Lutheran World Relief, as well as Anglican Communion relief and development initiatives.

v. Invite and support parishes to engage in action research to share their experiences of being a church engaged in mission. Collect both qualitative information (experiences and stories) and quantitative data (statistics) that could help other parishes engage in initiatives in this area.

C. A church that reclaims the depth and breadth of Anglicanism

By our baptism we are members of the Body of Christ and participants in the ministry by which that Body serves God’s mission. But our baptism does not render us identical. And it does not remove the challenge posed by distinctive and contending theological traditions within our common life.

The unity that allows us to make the commitment and shape that strategy is grounded in the reconciling ministry of Jesus, in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave or free (Galatians 3.28), and who “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2.14), bringing near those who were once far off (Ephesians 2.13).

Christ having accomplished this unity, we have no authority to undo his work. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’” (1 Corinthians 12.21) In the face of all temptation to separate into confessional groupings, it is the particular charism of Anglicanism to seek common ground, not in sameness, but in the communion offered in Christ. The Primates of the Anglican Communion recognized and valued this calling when they said, in the communiqué from their 2000 meeting in Porto, Portugal, “When we turn away from one another, we turn away from the cross of Jesus.”

Action items:

i. Mandate the Primate to engage people across the church in the Communion’s listening process to ensure that Anglicans across the spectrum have ample opportunities to listen to and respect each other and reclaim the depth and breadth that is Anglicanism.

ii. To rediscover the rich tradition of a Christ-centred spiritual life as a personal practice and as a way of bringing together conservative, moderate, and evolving spiritual viewpoints.

iii. Invite and support parishes to engage in action research to share their experiences of being a church reclaiming the depth and breadth of Anglicanism. Collect both qualitative information (experiences and stories) and quantitative data (statistics) that could help other parishes engage in initiatives in this area.

D. A church with the organizational capacity to be faithful and effective

The form and structure of the General Synod and its staff have remained substantially unchanged for forty years. In those forty years, a pattern of relationships among church, civic communities, public life and morality, and political leadership collectively described as “Christendom” has come decisively to an end. The per capita decline in church membership that has been the norm for over sixty years, now leaves us a church with limited resources, and the changing context suggests that those limited resources be applied to God’s mission in new ways.

Structures for a church engaged in the mission of God may turn out to be significantly different from structures for a church immersed in Christendom. Much of the missional innovation that will foster growing effectiveness in mission will come from local ministry settings, rather than from “head office.” Structures that recognize and nourish such innovation, and develop our capacity to learn from one another, are different from structures that came into being to deliver resources, knowledge and direction from head office to the franchises.

The predicament of the General Synod over the past decade and more calls to mind the complaint of Moses in Numbers: “Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they come weeping to me and say, ‘Give us meat to eat.’ I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me.” (Numbers 11.13-14)

God’s response is to remove the weight of obligation from Moses and share it among the seventy elders who meet with him in the tent of meeting. Leadership becomes dispersed and collaborative, rather than centralized and burdensome. The future effectiveness of the General Synod in fostering a capacity for mission among God’s people will emerge in part out of a renewed practice of dispersed and collaborative leadership.

Action items:

i. Reposition General Synod as the platform for information exchange and knowledge transfer within the church.

ii. Develop leadership capacity, recognizing the strengths and talents of our clergy and laity, and supporting their development. Encourage theological colleges to teach administrative and leadership skills and structure “specialty teams” to support front-line clergy and lay leaders.

iii. Affirm the ongoing work of the Governance Working Group to re-vision the ACC’s structures to suit today’s church population, resources, needs, and focus. Also encourage dioceses and parishes to examine their governance in the same way.

iv. Take leadership in a major financial campaign to support the mission of the ACC, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

v. Establish a system of gathering statistical data about the current composition of and important trends within the ACC.

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