



## **REVITALIZING THE DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN FOR DISCIPLESHIP & EVANGELIZATION**

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

After much prayer and consultation, I, as your Bishop, am ready to present to you the proposed steps to implement the fruits of our efforts in bringing about a realignment of our diocesan church in order to revitalize and assure its development and renewal for the future.

There have been steps in arriving at this final proposal.

As I wrote in the introduction of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan in 2012: “The initial “visioning” process came from the Presbyteral Assembly which I convoked in the Spring of 2008, where the question was asked of the priests, deacons and seminarians present: How can we continue to provide pastoral care for the people of our diocese?”

The plan developed after much consultation with three main objectives:

- revitalize our diocesan church
- contribute to the creation of vibrant faith communities which will be evangelizing presences in our midst
- leave a legacy of faith for the future.

While some of the objectives of the Pastoral Plan were easily implemented, it was quickly realized that to attempt a broad implementation of the plan, we would need to look more closely at some of the issues facing most North American dioceses; namely, demographic shifts in population, decreasing numbers in church attendance, decreasing numbers of vocations and an aging clergy, too many church buildings, some of which were in need of major repairs, and finally, a lack of sufficient funds to continue operating the diocesan and parish institutions as we had been doing.

It was felt at the time, that we did not have the resources locally to face the challenge of such a broad study that was required to start the process of parish realignment and revitalization.

The Council of Priests, recommended that we secure the services of the Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) to facilitate a process to help Revitalize and Realign the Diocese for Discipleship and Evangelization.

CLI came to us, having successfully been involved in a significant number of American and Canadian dioceses facing the same challenges as our diocese. They were engaged in January 2016.

What followed from that date to their final report in June 30, 2017, were several and extensive consultations, surveys, public meetings and workshops led by CLI.

For example, the “Disciple Maker Index” was completed by 6,600 people, 55% of current church goers.

The Presbyterate was surveyed, which confirmed the priests were open to plans to revitalize and realign the diocese.

Regional Workgroups were formed in the three regions of the diocese; Saint John, Fredericton and Miramichi to study the situation and make some proposals.

These groups met four times from August to November 2016. They studied the Pastoral Plan, the parishes’ sacramental and financial information, all in order to recommend new models of parish life.

In February 2017, a Presbyteral Assembly was held to inform the priests of the draft models and findings of the Workgroups and the ongoing project. The overall amount of change proposed was supported by over 75% of the priests.

Finally, Regional consultations were held in all three regions of the diocese; over 3,500 people attended. Feedback continued online and by mail, allowing a further 1,600 people to share their thoughts.

I have received the last two consultative documents with which I was to make my final decision on the realignment plan for the revitalization of the diocese.

These two documents are the final recommendations from CLI and the report of the Diocesan Steering Committee made up of priests and lay people from the three regions of the diocese.

In January 2018, I presented the report of the Steering Committees recommendations to the Council of Priests. It was received with mixed approval. I informed the Council members that I would take into consideration their opinions and recommendations and bring them to a final consultation with the members of our Diocesan Curia at the Chancery Office and that I would inform the Priests of the final proposals at a scheduled meeting in Fredericton. The Presbyteral Assembly was convoked for Tuesday, April 17, 2018 with a view of informing our Diocesan church from the pulpit on the weekend of April 21/22, 2018.

I wish to highlight some important aspects of the plan.

As of April 22, parishes will be clustered in view of them becoming 27 canonical parishes.

The focus of this process is on the merger of communities into new parishes rather than the closure of churches. At this time, 9 church buildings will be closed, leaving 70 churches to serve the present needs of our diocesan church.

In the Saint John Region, the region bearing the greatest financial burden, 23 parishes will merge into 13 parishes. Of the 30 churches serving these parishes, 5 will be closed, leaving 24 churches to serve as worship sites for the 13 parishes.

In the Fredericton Region, 19 parishes will be merged into 8 parishes. Of the number of the churches serving these parishes, 1 will be closed, leaving 25 churches to serve as worship sites for the 8 parishes.

In the Miramichi Region, 16 parishes will be merged into 6 parishes. Of the number of churches serving these parishes, 3 will be closed, leaving 21 churches to serve as worship sites for the 6 parishes.

As we tally the results, the 27 canonical parishes will have 70 churches serving as worship sites. I refer you to the detailed presentation which follows for more detail.

One of the major considerations has been to deal with the financial burden that some of the parishes are carrying and their ability to remedy this challenge.

It has to be made clear that the Diocese is no longer in a positive financial situation that allows it to continue carrying the financial burden of individual parishes and their debts.

The criteria used for the clustering of parishes, in addition to those already mentioned, were the following.

- a) geographical distance between worship sites.
- b) the consequences of leaving areas without clergy or church presence.
- c) historical issues and loss of our historical tradition which was attempted to be honoured.
- d) a special concern for the recently formed French parishes and communities – as well as a desire to honour the places of worship and history of our First Nations communities.

As of April 23, parishes are invited to begin the clustering of their communities into what will become newly merged canonical parishes. The necessary steps for doing this will be made available. This will need to happen as of September 1, 2018 for 14 clusters. The required canonical procedures will be followed including the necessary consultations. The remaining clusters are to become newly merged canonical parishes by September 1, 2019.

I am very much aware that these proposals and decisions will not satisfy everyone. I know that some will be upset and even angry at what is proposed. Others will see some of them as the much needed measures to revitalize our diocesan church which we have been planning for nearly ten years.

I ask you all dear sisters and brothers, to receive these proposals in the spirit of charity and good will, prayerfully remembering the greater good of the whole diocese, and especially St. Paul's directive to the Christian community at Philippi:

“Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2,4-5)

The vision statement which we are pursuing speaks of us as a revitalized Church living out our baptismal call:

- An evangelizing community that gives Jesus Christ to the world
- Full churches for Sunday Mass
- Intergenerational community of children, teens, young adults, middle-age, seniors
- The center of the community life serving those on the margin and most in need
- A community of growing disciples who share their faith, support one another, and lead others to Jesus Christ.

As we recognize the Holy Spirit, both inspiring and supporting the process in which we are involved, let us pray together for a New Pentecost in our diocesan church.

May God bless all of us in this difficult but necessary exercise.

Given at Saint John this 17<sup>th</sup> day of April 2018.

Sincerely in Christ,

✠ Robert Harris  
Bishop of Saint John

## **Saint John Region**

### **1. St. Stephen, St. Andrews, and Campobello (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Holy Rosary (St. Stephen), St. Stephen (St. Stephen) and St. Andrew (St. Andrews) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Stephen's Church and St. Andrew's Church will serve as worship sites. Holy Rosary Church will be closed. St. Timothy's Church (Campobello) will become a mission church of this parish (mass celebrated courtesy of the Diocese of Portland, Maine).

### **2. Blacks Harbour, St. George, and Grand Manan (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Stella Maris (Blacks Harbour) and St. George (St. George) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. Stella Maris Church and St. George's Church will serve as worship sites. St. Michael the Archangel Church (Grand Manan) will be a mission church of this parish.

### **3. Grand Bay-Westfield, West Saint John, and Dipper Harbour (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Augustine (Grand Bay-Westfield), St. Matthew (Grand Bay-Westfield) and St. Rose of Lima (Saint John) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Matthew's Church and St. Rose of Lima Church will serve as worship sites. St. Augustine's Church will be closed. St. Brendan's Church (Dipper Harbour) will be a mission church of this parish (no regularly scheduled mass).

### **4. West Saint John (1 Priest)**

The parish of Our Lady of the Assumption (Saint John) will remain as it is with Our Lady of the Assumption Church serving as its worship site.

### **5. Grand Saint John Francophone (1 prêtre)**

La paroisse de Saint-François-de-Sales (Saint-Jean) demeurera telle quelle ayant l'église Saint-François-de-Sales comme lieu de culte.

### **Greater Saint John Francophone (1 Priest)**

The parish of St.-François-de-Sales (Saint John) will remain as it is with l'Église-St.-François-de-Sales serving as its worship site.

### **6. Saint John North (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Holy Trinity (Saint John), St. Peter (Saint John) and St. Pius X (Saint John) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Pius X Church will serve as its worship site. Holy Trinity Church and St. Peter's Church will be closed.

**7. Saint John Central (1 Priest)**

The parishes of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (Saint John) and St. John the Baptist (Saint John) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception will serve as its worship site and as the Cathedral of the Diocese. St. John the Baptist Church will be closed.

**8. East Saint John (1 Priest)**

The parish of Sts. Joachim and Ann (Saint John) will remain as it is with St. Ann's Church serving as its worship site.

**9. Loch Lomond, East Saint John, and St. Martins (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Joseph (Saint John) and Stella Maris (Saint John) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Joseph's Church and Stella Maris Church will serve as worship sites. St. William's Church (St. Martins) will be a mission church of this parish.

**10. Rothesay (1 Priest)**

The parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Rothesay) will remain as it is with Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church serving as its worship site.

**11. Quispamsis (1 Priest)**

The parish of St. Mark (Quispamsis) will remain as it is with St. Mark's Church serving as its worship site.

**12. Hampton, Upham, and Chapel Grove (1 Priest)**

The parish of St. Alphonsus (Hampton) will remain as it is with St. Alphonsus Church serving as its worship site. St. Anthony's Church (Upham) will be a mission church of this parish. St. Bridget's Church (Chapel Grove) will become a mission church of this parish effective September 1, 2018.

**13. Sussex, Norton, and Head of Millstream (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Francis Xavier (Sussex) and Sacred Heart (Norton) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. St. Francis Xavier Church and Sacred Heart Church will serve as worship sites. St. Philip's Church (Head of Millstream) will be a mission of this parish.

## **Fredericton Region**

### **1. Bath, Florenceville, Johnville, and Juniper (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Joseph (Bath) and St. John the Evangelist (Johnville) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. St. Joseph's Church, St. Leo the Great Church (Florenceville) and St. John the Evangelist Church will serve as worship sites. St. Anthony of Padua Church (Juniper) will be a mission church of this parish. St. Bartholomew's Church will also be a mission of this parish with no regularly scheduled masses.

### **2. Woodstock, Canterbury, and Nackawic (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Gertrude (Woodstock), St. Agnes (Debec) and Sts. Simon and Jude (Nackawic) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Gertrude's Church and Sts. Simon and Jude Church will serve as worship sites. St. Thomas of Canterbury (Canterbury) will be a mission church of this parish. St. Bonaventure's Church (Lakeville), St. Joseph's Church (Newburg), St. Lawrence Church (Benton) will also be missions of this parish with no regularly scheduled masses. St. Francis of Assisi Shrine will continue to celebrate Shrine Sunday.

### **3. Fredericton North and Stanley (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Our Lady of Fatima (Fredericton), St. Anthony (Fredericton), St. Theresa (Fredericton) and St. Patrick (Stanley) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Anthony's Church, St. Theresa's Church and St. Patrick's Church will serve as worship sites. Our Lady of Fatima Church will be closed.

### **4. Minto, Chipman, and White's Cove (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Holy Rosary (Minto) and St. Joseph (Chipman) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. Holy Rosary Church and St. Joseph's Church will serve as worship sites. St. Patrick's Church (White's Cove) will be a mission church of this parish.

### **5. Fredericton South, Kingsclear, and McAdam (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Holy Family (Fredericton), St. Ann (Kingsclear) and St. Clement (McAdam) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. Holy Family Church, St. Ann's Church and St. Patrick's Church will serve as worship sites. St. Clement's Church will be a mission church of this parish. Immaculate Conception Church (Cork) and St. Mark's Church (Lake George) will also be missions of this parish with no regularly scheduled masses.

### **6. Fredericton South, New Maryland, and Fredericton Junction (2 Priests)**

The parishes of St. Dunstan (Fredericton) and Sts. John and Paul (New Maryland) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Dunstan's Church and Sts. John and Paul Church will serve as worship sites. St. Columba's Church (Fredericton Junction) will be a mission church of this parish.

**7. Oromocto, Lincoln, and Gagetown (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Vincent de Paul (Oromocto) and St. Francis of Assisi (Lincoln) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Vincent de Paul Church and St. Francis of Assisi Church will serve as worship sites. St. Bridget's Church (Gagetown) will be a mission church of this parish.

**8. Francophone du Grand Fredericton (1 prêtre)**

La paroisse de Sainte-Anne-des-Pays-Bas (Fredericton) demeurera telle quelle ayant l'église Sainte-Anne-des-Pays-Bas comme lieu de culte.

**Greater Fredericton Francophone (1 Priest)**

The parish of St.-Anne-des-Pays-Bas (Fredericton) will remain as it is with l'Église-St.-Anne-des-Pays-Bas serving as its worship site.

## **Miramichi Region**

### **1. Grand Miramichi francophone et Beaverbrook (1 prêtre)**

Les paroisses de la Nativité-de-la-Bienhereuse-Vierge-Marie / Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Miramichi) et de L'Ascension (Beaverbrook) seront fusionnées en une nouvelle paroisse à compter du 1<sup>er</sup> septembre 2019. Les églises de la Nativité / Nativity et de l'Ascension serviront comme lieux de culte.

### **Greater Miramichi Francophone and Beaverbrook (1 Priest)**

The parishes of Nativité-de-la-Bienhereuse-Vierge-Marie/Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Miramichi) and L'Ascension (Beaverbrook) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. L'Église Nativité/Nativity Church and L'Église Ascension and will serve as worship sites.

### **2. Red Bank, Sevogle, and Eel Ground (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Thomas the Apostle (Red Bank) and St. James (Sevogle) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Thomas the Apostle Church and St. James Church will serve as worship sites. St. Joachim's Church (Eel Ground) will become a mission church of this parish.

### **3. Miramichi West, Bartibog, and Burnt Church (2 Priests)**

The parishes of St. Mary (Miramichi), St. Samuel (Miramichi), Sts. Peter and Paul (Bartibog) and St. Ann (Burnt Church) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Mary's Church, St. Samuel's Church, Sts. Peter and Paul Church and St. Ann's Church will serve as worship sites. Holy Family Church (Barryville) and All Saints Church (Millbank) will be closed.

### **4. Miramichi East, Bayside, and St. Margarets (2 Priests)**

The parishes of St. Michael (Miramichi), St. Andrew (Miramichi) and St. Margaret (St. Margarets) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. St. Michael's Basilica and St. Andrew's Church will serve as worship sites. The Apparition of St. Michael the Archangel Church (Bayside) and St. Margaret's Church (St. Margarets) will be mission churches of this parish.

### **5. Nelson-Miramichi, Barnaby, and Chelmsford (1 Priest)**

The parishes of St. Patrick (Miramichi) and Most Pure Heart of Mary (Barnaby) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2019. St. Patrick's Church and Most Pure Heart of Mary Church will serve as worship sites. St. Edward's Church (Chelmsford) will be a mission church of this parish.

**6. Blackville, Boiestown, Doaktown, Renous, and Howard (2 Priests)**

The parishes of St. Raphael (Blackville), St. Joachim (Boiestown) and St. Bridget (Renous) will be merged into one new parish effective September 1, 2018. St. Raphael's Church, St. Joachim's Church, Our Lady of the Annunciation Church (Doaktown) and St. Bridget's Church will serve as worship sites. Our Lady of Good Counsel Church (Millerton) will be closed. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (Howard) will be a mission church of this parish.