



The  
Diocese of Huron

## SUMMARY

### TURNING TO GRACE: OUR DIOCESAN PLAN



*Turning to Grace*

## PREAMBLE

In God's Creation, change is constant. The world is in a constant state of flux. Not all change is for the better but, when it is rooted in God's continuing creative and redemptive activity, it is always good. Within this work of God, we are summoned faithfully to feel our way forward, to map, assess, and learn from the swirling and flowing patterns of God's work and to intentionally participate in it.

This plan is an attempt to do this, together, as a demonstration of trust that *the One who has promised is faithful* (Hebrews 10.23b). We are not called to save the Church; we already have a Saviour. Without a plan, however we respond to the events and circumstances around us largely by reaction or out of fear. To plan well is an act of hope, it is to introduce an element of self-determination in the choices that we have made, are making, and will make. *Turning to Grace* attempts to be direct and honest in its assessment of how we might better allocate our existing, future, and potential resources: people and physical things (buildings, property, etc.).

Within an overall emphasis on the newness and freshness of God's Resurrection promise, *Turning to Grace* sets out three aspirations: to become a learning church, a more just church, and a more diverse church. These things are built on the foundation of strategic stewardship and resource allocation. Specific Acts and Actions are outlined for each of these areas. These are collected together separately.

The Diocesan Plan will guide us for the foreseeable future. It will shape our decision making, resource allocation, reporting, and communication. It sets out what we will do collectively as a Diocese and what we will encourage each individual parish that makes up the Diocese to do. We will be accountable to God and to each other for it. There are likely not too many surprises here. Many parishes are already living the aspirations of the plan and are already engaged in the activities it proposes; we hope that they can provide encouragement and inspiration to others. Naturally, many things will continue to be done that are not specifically mentioned in *Turning to Grace*, but arguably everything that we *do* do should relate in some way to its broad pillars and overarching direction.



## INTRODUCTION:

### THE PRINCIPLES OF TURNING TO GRACE

#### INTRODUCTION

The title of this Diocesan Plan is “Turning to Grace.” This is intended to have several meanings at the same time.

One meaning follows from what happened on the first Easter morning. At the empty tomb of Jesus, faces turned inward to see only the emptiness of the moment, Jesus appears and speaks—to draw attention to himself and then to direct attention to a New Creation that, because of his Resurrection, was stretching out before them. His followers—his loved ones—had to turn from loss, find his face again (even though it was difficult to recognize), and turn their own faces to the new, challenging, and glorious way ahead of them. It is a turning toward the face of grace, Jesus himself as the ikon of the triune God, which always redeems and reorients his disciples so that they can be beacons of Resurrection hope for the world.

We pray that our work, following this plan, will be carried out with these dynamics and these benefits! There are many challenging realities we must “face up to” so we pray for courage and faith in everything we seek to do as we intentionally find ways to turn our faces to the grace of God.

#### CREATION AND NEW CREATION

The Diocese of Huron aspires to be a Church that is firmly Christ-centred and (New)Creation-focussed, made new by being open and receptive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. It means allowing ourselves to let go of some things in order to imagine and embrace new possibilities.

The Church, and the Diocese of Huron with it, is getting smaller. We yearn for the ability to guide and shape this contraction faithfully and prayerfully. We need to work deliberately with it instead of just letting it happen. The overall objective of this consolidation is to have the right number of healthy, thriving, self-sustaining parishes full of people.

The church of the twentieth century is gone but the central truths and practices of the Anglican church all gathered and centred around the Risen Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit remain and sustain us.

### GENEROUSLY ORTHODOX AND RECOGNISABLY ANGLICAN

We aspire to be a Church that is recognizably Anglican and generously orthodox.

The “Anglican way” can be described as “a generous orthodoxy”. Some would say that you can be “generous” or “orthodox” but not both. The terms seem to be in opposition or in tension. Yet, we affirm that these two terms, attitudes, and ways-of-being, are best together. We know what it is to be generous, to receive generosity, and we understand that this is what God is like - “generous”. “Orthodox” comes from the Greek words *ortho* (“right”) and *doxa* (“opinion” or “praise”). Orthodox beliefs and actions together with a generous heart lead to the proper praise of God through our lips and in our lives.

There is a wideness to God’s mercy, and our understanding of it is constrained and given focus by God through what we are referring to as the “recognizably Anglican” patterns of: placing Scripture at the centre, affirming the historic creeds, the sacraments of Baptism of Eucharist, and the gathering of the church around the ministry of a bishop. These guide us in our generous understanding of orthodoxy.

A generous Anglican orthodoxy is the animating core of *Turning to Grace*.

### CORE OF THE PLAN

The three pillars of *Turning to Grace* support an overarching commitment to the openness and freshness that comes of the following the leading of the Holy Spirit into the New Creation. They are built on a foundation of strategic stewardship and resource allocation. Discipleship undergirds it all. Commitments and actions related to Indigenous Ministry and Property are found throughout and more detailed strategies will be developed for these two areas.

The pillars are interrelated and mutually reinforce one another. There must be a balance. Activities and initiatives in each of these areas are already happening across the whole Diocese. Turning to Grace aims to encourage further and deeper engagement by parishes and deaneries, while understanding that not every parish or deanery will be able to do everything.





## PILLAR ONE

### A LEARNING CHURCH FOR DISCIPLESHIP

#### *Learning*

A Learning Church is not primarily about intellectual learning but about curiosity and discovery that promotes a Spirit-led sense of newness, transformation, and delight in sharing the fruits of our inquiries with one another. To learn in this way is to be shaped and formed together as disciples and pupils of Christ.

While being a Learning Church is less a curriculum than a commitment to a series of practices, nevertheless a basic understanding of Christian teachings and beliefs is essential. If you were new to Christianity what would you need to know to practice it? And how and with whom? It is impossible to be a Christian alone.

The Learning Church is for the whole People of God; for all ages; for new and life-long Christians; for new and cradle Anglicans; for the laity and for those who are ordained. Whether undertaken individually or with others, life-long learning is a key component of personal spiritual growth and sanctification. Becoming more of a Learning Church will help to support the other two pillars and *Turning to Grace* as a whole.

The Acts and Activities that will support the Learning Church are designed to foster and encourage spiritual development and small-group learning. They aim to support leadership and vocational development for both laity and clergy.

We will develop an integrated pattern of learning and formation for clergy, from initial inquiry and postulancy through the early years of ordination and beyond. The Canon Catechists as well as Huron, Canterbury, and Renison Colleges have an important role to play in this areas as do existing groups and organisations that foster theological education and prayer.



## PILLAR TWO

### A MORE JUST CHURCH

#### *Just*

When we speak of becoming a more Just Church, we speak of God's Justice. In our actions, we endeavour to imitate God's ways and to reflect—insofar as it is possible for us as created beings—God's essential Being *as Love*. We then strive to follow God's loving and merciful way of thinking so as to acknowledge and honour the Reign of God in our lives and in our world. This is a merciful, gracious, and active response. It is *doing* justice and *loving* kindness.

God's Justice is an all-encompassing justice that is driven by reconciliation, care, and love. It enfolds and transforms all other kinds of justice, all causes, all movements—from concerns about environmental degradation, inequality, and sustainability to how we engage

with other Christian groups as well as non-Christian religions in ecumenical and interfaith activities. It should inform how we allocate our material resources, including property. It shapes how we engage with one another to ensure that we have Safe and Healthy Churches.

## RECONCILIATION

St. Paul describes reconciliation as a—and perhaps *the*—key Christian activity. We are impelled to strive for reconciliation with others and of others to God because of God’s gracious and loving mercy displayed in the Incarnation of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

All of us are called to be reconcilers in the widest sense and to recognise that there is a spectrum of reconciliation, not a single focus. As Canadians and Anglicans we are also called to reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of the land and especially in the Diocese of Huron and this is a key objective of *Turning to Grace*. Reconciliation also relates to dealing with the existing and future conflicts encompassing everything from personal or theological disagreements as well as our human brokenness that leads to serious situations that contravene Safe Church protocols.

## THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The integrity of God’s creation is under threat and at risk of collapse. There is an urgent need to do more. Many parishes are already very active in this area. It is not enough to change what we do, we must transform our relationship with creation.

## POVERTY REDUCTION AND HOMELESSNESS

While the Church cannot solve intractable social problems relating to crises in mental health, affordability, and housing on its own, we can contribute to a whole community response to them. We want to make a material difference to the lives of marginalised and vulnerable people and we aspire to create a world where there is enough for all and everyone has a home.



## PILLAR THREE

### A MORE DIVERSE CHURCH

The witness of Scripture attests to the fundamental oneness of all created beings in the eyes of God. Made in the image and likeness of the Creator and having put on Christ in baptism, our ultimate end is as part of that great and diverse multitude assembled around the Throne of the Lamb. And yet, Jesus’ prayer *that they all may be one* has yet to be realised because of our human brokenness and sin.

Jesus’ Great Commission draws no boundaries; the Good News of the Gospel is for all peoples and nations. As Christians, we are called to exercise hospitality and practice generosity in the face of difference since we are all beloved children of God.

*Turning to Grace* has a vision of a church that is more diverse in all respects. We aspire to be a church that embraces the God-given difference in language and culture that reflects our common goal of unity in Christ. This includes diversity of all types and not simply cultural background, ethnicity, country of origin, gender, or sexuality. Other kinds of diversity include socio-economic, intergenerational, and local Anglican context (specific Anglican theological or liturgical expression of the community, how ministry is exercised, etc.) We want to encourage parishes to recognise and foster the communities that are developing within parishes and to see this ministry as a gift and not as a threat.

While becoming more visibly diverse is not always possible for rural parishes because of local demographics, other forms of diversity as described here are attainable—and probably already present in our parishes whether recognised or not.

Initiatives around Christian unity fall into this category as well. We can build on existing ecumenical and even interfaith cooperation in small centres by working together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately.

An overall objective for the Diverse Church is to learn from the already existing diversity in our Church starting with Indigenous Anglicans and extending it to recognize and welcome the incredible diversity of the Anglican Communion in every respect.



## THE FOUNDATION

### STEWARDSHIP & RESOURCES

The success of the vision of *Turning to Grace* is dependent on having a firm foundation of resources upon which to build. By “resources” is meant people and property as well as financial resources.

#### STEWARDSHIP

People, places, and property constitute the Diocese of Huron. We hold these things, which we have inherited, as stewards along with our inherited faith and Anglican spirituality. We are also stewards of the painful inheritances and healing possibilities arising out of our own brokenness as well as that of those who came before us.

Stewardship not only suggests the care of the resources that we already possess, it also implies the development of those resources and the cultivation of new ones. In other words: fundraising. We hope that *Turning to Grace* will provide others with a sense of confidence in the future of the Anglican Church and the Diocese of Huron. We ourselves know that our future is in the hands the God in and by whom all things are possible.

*Turning to Grace* encourages all of us to consider both impact and legacy in assessing the effectiveness of our stewardship as it relates both to financial resources and property. Stewardship requires making choices and to face honestly the situation before us.



## RESOURCES

There are two categories of resources, existing (parish giving, apportionment, investment income) and potential (fundraising, planned giving, sale or development of property). Most of the focus is at the parish level, because if the local parish is doing well, the Diocese is also doing well.

## PROPERTY

All Diocesan property is owned the Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron and held in common. It forms a significant part of all of the resources of the Diocese. We need to be more strategic in our stewardship of our properties. We need to consider both the needs of the individual parish and those of the Diocese as a whole. Some churches will merge or close. Other properties may remain fallow for a time in order to allow us to have a foothold in certain areas. We must have a vital and viable Anglican presence in rural and regional areas. The sale of properties is an important source of potential revenue but it is a non-renewable source. We have an obligation to ensure that cemeteries are cared for in perpetuity (although not necessarily by the Diocese).

## INDIGENOUS MINISTRIES

An **Indigenous Ministry Plan** as an offshoot of *Turning to Grace* is currently being developed which focusses on understanding the past, creating opportunities to connect with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities for education and outreach, and developing a team-based approach to ministry.

## CAMP HURON

**Camp Huron** is a common resource available for the whole Diocese and remains central to its mission. Consideration is being given to incorporating it as a separate charitable entity, which would assist in qualifying for grants and in fundraising.



*Accountability*

## ACCOUNTABILITY

## & REPORTING ON PROGRESS

While the Diocese is blessed with gifted lay leaders and parishes could not run without volunteer leadership, Turning to Grace assigns responsibility for most things to people paid by the Diocese. Overall responsibility and accountability for the implantation of the plan rests with the Secretary-Treasurer, who will be supported in that role by the other Archdeacons and the Governance Coordinator. Individuals and groups to whom specific acts and actions are assigned are not necessarily responsible for doing the work, only ensuring that it gets done.

Turning to Grace will be regularly reviewed and an annual report on progress provided.



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