



Anglican Network in Canada

Office of the Diocesan Bishop
The Right Reverend Charles Masters
Box 1013 · Burlington · ON
L7R 4L8 · Canada

12 February 2016

Greetings dear friends!

I know you are all working hard preparing for your **Annual Vestry Meeting!** I also know there is much to do as you prepare your congregational reports for our Diocese and Province. Thank you so much for your attention to these – **and to what I am now asking of you and your vestry.**

I am praying that your vestry meeting will be filled with **thanksgiving to God** for what He has done in you and through you in the past year and that, as a people, you will be able to discern what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God as you plan for the coming year.

My requests for your vestry meeting... and beyond

I ask that you include our **5 Ministry Priorities** in your prayers, thoughts and discussions – as you prepare for your vestry meeting, during the meeting, and in the very life of your church.

Remember we are praying that God will make all five Priorities transformational realities in every ANiC congregation. That means real change, not just words, but real growth and visible development. This means prayer, it also means assessing where are now, it means making concrete plans to improve in these five areas, and it means checking ourselves from time to time to see how we are doing.

- 1) Preparation prior to vestry** – As church leaders, please be in prayer asking God how He intends to use these 5 Priorities to transform your people more and more into the likeness of our Lord. Take time to prayerfully consider the following questions. (See the **attachment** for suggested questions and ideas to get you thinking about each of the Priorities.)
 - Looking back over the past year, what progress have you seen in relation to the 5 Priorities? Ask yourselves how you are doing in each of these areas.
 - As you plan for the year to come, which of the Priorities do you believe God is leading you to address immediately and which could you focus on in subsequent years?
 - What specific steps could you, as a church, take to ensure that these Priorities become transformational realities in the life of your congregation?
 - How could you measure or assess progress at the end of this year? Next year?
- 2) Vestry meeting action** – As you gather, please **pray** together asking God to make these Priorities transformational realities in your life and witness together. Then, together, discuss the questions above. And, as a body, decide which Priority/Priorities you will focus on initially. Smaller congregation may wish to focus only on one to begin with. Those with more capacity may be able to take on more than one. Then develop a **plan** with specific actions and clear goals.



Also, if you are able, try to include funds in your budget to allow you to build the “capacity” of your clergy and church leaders so they will be able to lead you in this transformational journey. For example, prayerfully consider budgeting for:

- ANiC’s apologetics & preaching training – *God’s Word Written*, June 14-16 in Vancouver
- New Wineskins for Global Mission 2016 conference, April 7-10 in North Carolina
- And especially Clergy Day & Synod 2016, October 25-28, in Vancouver

3) Implementation and reporting – I desperately need God’s blessing and to know His pleasure. And I believe you do too. So let’s encourage, support and pray for each other as we grow together in grace and the knowledge of our Lord. But growth doesn’t happen without **commitment and accountability**.

Report – In a month or so, I will send a very brief **survey** asking you what Priority/Priorities your church is focusing on this year. Then we will follow up as the year progresses to see how you are doing and how we can better support you.

Regular check-ups – Please make the 5 Priorities a regular agenda item at parish council meetings. This will allow you to assess if you are on track for achieving your objective(s) and, if not, what action is needed.

Prayer - Please ask your parishioners to pray daily about the 5 Priorities becoming transformational realities in your church. (You might need to occasionally remind the congregation of this commitment.) Also pray regularly as a congregation for this.

As I and my fellow bishops travel the country we are **so impressed and encouraged** by how seriously each congregation is attending to these Priorities. I am very encouraged and bless you and thank you for this.

I am so grateful for our five Priority leaders and their committee members who are seeking to provide encouragement and resources to assist you. Very soon there will be pages on our website dedicated to each priority. I hope you will make requests and suggestions of what you might find helpful and also share stories of some of the exciting things God is doing in your congregation. This will bless and encourage us all.

Last week I was speaking to a rector who spoke about the multitude of things that are happening in his congregation as they have embraced "On Mission". I asked him to write up a description and I hope that it might be posted to encourage us all.

So dear friends, I am so grateful we are all partners in the gospel. We are about building biblically faithful, gospel sharing Anglican congregations across Canada and in New England. It is a great time of opportunity and I believe these priorities are assisting us to make ourselves available to the Lord of the harvest so there can be a great harvest and multitudes of labourers will be raised up for Him.

Every Blessing!



Thinking about the 5 Priorities

These are intended as suggestions to help you begin to think about assessing and planning for each Priority. Please add your own questions. Then use these as you seek to discern where you are by God's grace and how you might move forward even more in the coming years.

Bold witnesses – What percentage of your members is equipped and ready to share their testimony of how they received the Lord Jesus into their life? What percentage is ready to share the gospel in a clear and winsome way and invite people to respond? What specific actions can we take this year so that more are trained and equipped and that percentage grows? What percentage is an appropriate target? (HINT: My prayer is that, during my term as diocesan, 100% of ANiC parishioners will be able to confidently and winsomely share their testimony and clearly communicate the heart of the Gospel.)

Biblically Grounded – What percentage of your congregation read the Bible every day? What percentage are in small group Bible studies? And, as a congregation, have you made provision in your budget for your clergy to attend ANiC's outstanding apologetics and preaching conference, *God's Word Written*, on June 14-16 in Vancouver? This conference will help them grow in their teaching and in proclaiming powerfully and faithfully God's Word.

On Mission – What percentage of the church budget is dedicated to missions work (locally, nationally and internationally)? Do you pray regularly as a congregation and as individuals for missions? What mission opportunities do you see in your neighbourhood? What mission partnerships (near or far) are close to the heart of your church members? What is your next step as a congregation in reflecting God's heart for a lost and hurting world? Are you able to budget to send someone to the excellent *New Wineskins for Global Mission 2016* [conference](#), April 7-10 in North Carolina?

Loving Children and Families – How are you incorporating the children in the life of the church? How are you training up the children in the way they should go? How are you encouraging and supporting the families and the marriages in your church? How could you better minister to children in your neighbourhood? Are your people actively engaged in Anglicans for Life?

Planting and Growing Churches – Is your congregation talking and praying about planting another congregation out of your church family in the future? What could you do better to retain members? Do you follow-up with people whose attendance has dropped off? How do you welcome and draw newcomers into the life of the church? Does your website effectively encourage visitors? Do you plan your services with newcomers in mind? Do you make the way of salvation clear each Sunday and invite people to discuss their questions with you?