

Report of the NSOM Task Group to Diocesan Council

*Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island
October 20th, 2012*

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OUR WORK HAS BEEN DIRECTED BY THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT OF OUR MANDATE FROM DIOCESAN COUNCIL:

- 1. Moved by D. Burleson
Seconded by R. Moore**

"This Diocesan Council desires to renew and reopen the NSOM program in time to receive new enquirers for Dec 31, 2012."

Motion Vote: Carried/2 abstentions

- 2. Moved by C. Fraser
Seconded by K. Wagner**

"That we extend the moratorium until the October meeting and ask the Task Group to bring back information and to report that we have enough in October to lift the moratorium aiming to receiving applications at the end of this year."

Friendly Amendment: A. Chapman

"That the Task Group be comprised of lay members/NSOM/and stipendiary members and suggests it be 5 persons."

"That the Diocesan Council strikes a task group to renew the NSOM program, focusing on 4 areas; parish discernment resources, naming of the program, formation and educational components and that we report to the October 2012 meeting of the Diocesan Council."

Motion vote: Carried

NSOM Task Group Membership

The Rev'd. Ron Barkhouse, NSOM Priest, Parish of St. Martin's, Western Shore

The Rev'd. Cathy Lee Cunningham, Part-Time Rector, Church of the Good Shepherd, Beaver Bank and Principal, Spirit of Reciprocity Consulting

Edy Guy-Francois, Warden, St. Andrew's, Locks Rd., Dartmouth

Max Mouton, Warden, St. Paul's, Halifax

Archdeacon Marilyn Newport, Acting Coordinator of Anglican Health Care, QEII

Core Values

The core values and beliefs that we share together as a Task Force:

1. We ground ourselves and the process in the knowledge that all of our ministry callings are from God;
2. Any process we form and recommend must, at its very core, be spiritual and prayerful.

Theological Foundations in God's Word

At the very foundation of our work is our reflection on the Word of God. As we reviewed all of the work that has been accomplished through the NSOM program as well as all of the challenges and unresolved issues that require our collective and prayerful intention as we journey forward in the name of our Lord Jesus, we found strength, guidance and clarity in the following verses and passages of scripture, taken from The Message translation by Eugene H. Peterson:

Ephesians 4: 23, 24:

Take on an entirely new way of life- a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces ~~his~~ God's character in you.

Romans 12: 2:

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what ~~he~~ God wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to a level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Revelation 21: 1-7:

I saw heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea. I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending resplendent out of heaven, as ready for God as a bride for her husband. I heard a voice thunder from the throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making God's home with men and women! They're God's people, God's their God. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good- tears gone, crying gone, pain gone- all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down- each word dependable and accurate."

The Psalmist said, "Be still and know that I am God."

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Our document is formed in reference to the following documents, which can be found on the website of the Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island (www.nspeidiocese.ca):

1. The Bishop's Guidelines for Non-Stipendiary Ordained Ministry 1.1.21, Revised 2004
2. Review of the Non-Stipendiary Ordained Ministry (NSOM) Program, December 2011
3. Review of the Non-Stipendiary Ordained Ministry Program, April 2003
4. Guidelines for Healthy Parish Life
5. Prerequisites for Ordination of the Anglican Church of Canada
6. The Ordinal

Defining Renewal

The expressed desire of the Diocesan Council "to renew and re-open the NSOM program in time to receive new enquirers for Dec 31, 2012" held special energy and attention for us, especially as we understood the bulk of our task to be the articulation of a **renewed** program that honours the findings of the reviews of the NSOM program conducted in 2003 and 2011 as well as the collective experience of those who have been involved in and touched by NSOM in the Diocese from its inception. We did not want the wisdom gained through that work to be lost, but rather to inform our final recommendations to Diocesan Council. We have been especially intentional about creating a process which will provide a strengthened discernment process that responds to the painful and conflicted realities of the NSOM program of the past. We have approached our task in a deeply spiritual way and see it as not only the practical refinement of the program, but a renewal of it as a holy offering to God.

Informed by the reviews of the NSOM program, especially in light of the call for changes that acknowledge and challenge our weaker tendencies and sensibilities, we worked with the following definition of the word "renew":

1. To make like new: restore freshness, vigor or perfection [as we renew our strength in the Lord]
2. To make new spiritually [regenerate]
3. a. to restore to existence [revive]
b. to make extensive changes in [rebuild]
4. to do again [repeat]
5. to begin again [resume]
6. replace, replenish [to renew water in a tank]
7. a. to grant or obtain an extension of or on [renew a license]
b. to grant or obtain an extension on the loan of [renew a library book]

There were many concerns and questions raised in the previous reviews that we feel have not been explored and answered. We are concerned about the voices that we have heard through

these findings of grief, anger, unresolved conflict and fear and of power struggles that have led to destructive conflict in the life of some parishes. We feel that these named realities require deeper work. We strongly recommend that this work begin immediately. Our recommendations to Diocesan Council acknowledge these realities in the love and healing power of our Lord Jesus. We recommend that an intentional effort be made to address these hurts through dialogue and education in conflict transformation and healthy communication and that when these issues arise in the future an immediate response be made to resolve them before they fester and spread through the life of the parish. We feel that this will be the only safe and strong foundation on which any renewal of the NSOM program will be able to stand for God.

Discernment

The discernment process is as much for the parish as for the individual experiencing the call to NSOM. Therefore, the parish will also need to engage its own process of discernment, apart from the individual. The individual and the parish will need to come together in the process at various points to discern this call.

Through our own discernment of the elements of a renewed process we frequently discussed the need to get away from a focus on the “NS” (non-stipendiary) and to focus more on the “OM” (ordained ministry) of NSOM.

As the parish discerns its ministry callings, together with individuals perceiving an initial call to ordained ministry as a self-supporting ordained minister who will remain in his or her local parish, it is vital that the parish and individual remain open to be led by the Holy Spirit in a variety of directions which may or may not embody that initial call to NSOM.

A Recommended Renewed Discernment Process

While the work of this Task Group is focused on the NSOM process, we all recognize and affirm that for the people of God, the discernment of call and formation for ministry and the service of God is to be an ongoing way of life, by virtue of the waters of baptism.

1. The process is standardized and is intended to be the same for all parishes. Mature spiritual and emotional discernment and formation is the foundation and strength of the entire process.
2. Openness to the leadings of the Holy Spirit is an essential characteristic for any parish seeking to discern NSOM. At the outset of the process individuals and parishes discerning a call will need to be prayerful and open to the leadings of the Spirit, realizing that the Spirit may lead them in a direction that is not where they themselves want to go. At the earliest stages, deep, open and honest conversation will be essential in order to determine the readiness not only of an individual, but

- also of the incumbent and the parish to accept the results of a discernment process, especially if the result is a call to a ministry expression other than NSOM.
3. A Vocations Coordinator needs to be put in place, that person being one who will walk alongside of the individual who is discerning the call to NSOM and the incumbent and parish, from the very outset of their journey and to its conclusion. Individuals and parishes should keep in mind that the conclusion of the process may vary from context to context.
 4. A Vocations Team will work together with the Vocations Coordinator to provide the parish with the resources and pathways necessary for the process of discernment and formation at each phase of the journey. Those who make up the Vocations Team will have different specialized knowledge, skills and professional experience in areas including but not limited to: discernment of call; education for ministry; conflict transformation; congregational development; family systems dynamics; facilitation of dialogue; team ministry; healthy organizational life; human resources, etc. Team members will be provided with the additional resources that they need to assist and strengthen the individuals and parishes involved in the process. The Vocations Team will be provided at the beginning of the process and will stay in place until the process comes to its conclusion.
 5. There are two possible initial “calling” scenarios:
 - a. An individual perceives a call to be a deacon or a priest in their home parish and desires to continue to be self-supporting;
 - b. The parish sees the gifts of a deacon or priest in an individual and feels that the ministry would be of benefit to the ongoing mission of the parish.
 6. When an individual is experiencing a call to a new ministry (i.e. ordained, lay, non-stipendiary priesthood, diaconate) that person will meet with their rector and then with the Parish Council to have a discussion about the nature of the ministry to which God is calling the individual and the parish.
 7. If the Rector, Parish Council and individual wish to pursue an ordained ministry stream, the Rector will then notify the Bishop of the intention to proceed. If the Bishop concurs, the Bishop will then contact the individual to schedule a meeting.
 8. For each of these prospective callings a separate process needs to be put in place. If the individual and parish discerns for NSOM, if the individual and parish discerns for ordained ministry, or if the individual and parish discern for new lay ministry, a referral will be made to a Spiritual Director.

9. If the parish and the individual determine that they would like to proceed to the next phase of discerning a call to NSOM and the Bishop agrees:
 - a. A time during regular Sunday worship will be set aside for an NSOM presentation to be made to the Parish Council/ Church Councils and the parish (if there are three separate services, there will be three separate presentations, etc.);
 - b. Following the initial presentation and at a time that is convenient to parish life and that will maximize the potential for a good turnout of parishioners, an external facilitator will go to visit the parish to facilitate a discernment dialogue in circle, focused on surfacing peoples' thoughts and feelings about NSOM. This process will be open to all members of the parish and mandatorily include the individual, incumbent and parish council.
10. Before any further decision is taken, the parish and the individual will be provided with a suggested reading list encompassing different embodiments of lay and ordained ministry, the dynamics of congregational life and healthy communications and conflict competence in dealing with difference.
11. If it is decided that the parish will proceed, a Discernment Committee, drawn from the participants in the parish process thus far, will be formed and given a specific mandate and timeline for its work.
12. A Relational/Behavioural Covenant will then be formed with the assistance of a trained facilitator external to the parish and appointed by the Vocations Coordinator in consultation with the Bishop, before any further action is taken. The covenant will be referenced before each meeting through the rest of the discernment process.
13. A Healthy Congregational Life Assessment will be conducted by a person appointed by the Vocations Coordinator in consultation with the Bishop, to identify any areas in the history of the parish or region where there has been a crisis/ conflict. This will include an exploration of the following:
 - Have any such circumstances been handled well or poorly?
 - Is there any work that needs to be done in order to reconcile any past wounding experiences before the process goes further?
 - Have there been difficult personalities/people that have motivated divisiveness, controversy, strife or anxiety? Has this been addressed?
14. The individual, incumbent and parish will demonstrate to the Vocations Team that the parish is healthy and that the chances for division arising in the parish as a whole will be very unlikely should the continued process guide the individual and parish in a direction that does not embody NSOM.

15. The parish will be reassured that the Vocations Coordinator and relevant members of the Team will continue to work with the individual, incumbent and parish in their process of discernment, regardless of the call being to ordained or lay ministry.

NECESSARY ACTION STEPS, TO BE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY:

1. A Vocations Coordinator to be put in place;
2. A supporting Vocations Team to be put in place;
3. Materials be developed that explain the new process for discernment and be sent to every parish in the diocese;
4. Resource materials be developed to support the discernment process at all of its various stages such as:
 - a. A suggested reading list;
 - b. A brochure explaining the development process for a Relational/Behavioural Covenant;
 - c. A brochure explaining how a Healthy Congregational Life Assessment is conducted;
5. Workshops be developed and made available to any parish that needs further clarification about the renewed discernment process;
6. Develop new time lines to better support the process;
7. In light of the recommended changes in the new process, the Bishops examine the need for the Vocations Conference and ACPO in the Discernment process for NSOM.