

Cathedral Place: Regarding A Motion
“To Exercise Stewardship of a Key Diocesan Asset”
An interim report on the 2012 Synod motion from The Cathedral Place Property Committee,
October 2013

Introduction/Recap

“Cathedral Place” is the entity created two decades ago when The Diocese of Niagara moved its operations and Synod Office into the Cathedral. While a draft agreement has never formally ratified, “Cathedral Place” has been functioning in a relationship of mutual ownership and responsibility ever since. In November of 2012, Synod passed a motion about the care and function of Cathedral Place asking that Synod Council name a task force to evaluate benefits/concerns and make recommendations for Synod 2014. (The motion is found at <http://www.niagara.anglican.ca/Synod2012/index.cfm>). To date, Synod Council has not struck the task force asked for by this motion. It is not the purpose of this interim report to speak to the reasons for this, rather to report on the constructive work that has been accomplished.

The Work of The Cathedral Place Property Committee

...is to be accountable to Synod for the maintenance and operation of Cathedral place: it’s the good function, safety, structural and historic integrity and capacity of the building to support the ministry that happens there for everyone in the Diocese. It has equal representation from the Cathedral corporation and the Synod of Niagara and reports directly to Synod. Last year’s motion was put forward from its membership. The motive, in part, came from a growing awareness that the nature of the functioning arrangement was not widely understood, neither the benefits nor challenges of the same, in the Diocese.

It should be noted that in the course of 2012, the committee saw the resignation of its chair, the departure of its Synod Staff support and Acting Chair (Archdeacon Patterson), a change in property management staff and, later in the year, the sabbatical leave of the Dean. All of these factors have not prevented the group from continuing to work on your behalf in finding ways to fulfill this mandate in light of often limited financial resources. In their efforts to fulfil this mandate, the committee has become aware of representations of “Cathedral Place” as a liability, or the facility as a “black hole”.

There is no argument that doing ministry together is a big financial investment - this is not a matter of debate. There is also no argument that there are places in our Diocese where fully funding parish mission is exceedingly difficult. But an invitation inviting us to not celebrate one of the largest asset for mission and witness to Christ that we have on our Diocesan spiritual balance sheet does not stand up to scrutiny. More work needs to be done to foster understanding that the cost of our shared function - accommodated on James Street North - is not in competition with our mission: it is an integral part of it.

Why Cathedral Place Is A Key Diocesan Asset

There has been a good deal of ink, prayer and other resources spilled in recent years to affirm the ownership of the assets other generations have entrusted to us to accomplish our Anglican mission. Cathedral Place not only continues to house both our Cathedral and Synod Offices and the services they provide the parishes: but you, the Diocese, own it in trust for those purposes. Faithful to this, Cathedral Place is home to one of the most remarkably diverse ministries in Niagara, with thousands of people coming through the doors to experience Anglican mission in our part of the world. As a matter of daily routine, it handles, “in house” a vast welcome to every member of our Diocese, its worshipping congregations, task forces, committees, boards, vision petal groups, shared programs, administration and Synod Council, and

finds a way to accommodate them all. Next, it is the home base for unified civic engagement with all levels of government and community as we, the Diocese, do our part in tackling the issues of our day from poverty to environment to fostering a just society, all part of reflecting the nature of Christ in our time. Third, as the Diocese engages locally, unlike many Dioceses in North America which have no congregations, our Cathedral's congregation is vibrant, making many other partnerships possible with us, including the Jamesville Daycare Centre, Hamilton Association for Residential, Recreational and Redevelopment Programs (HARRRP), the internationally acclaimed Hamilton Children's Choir, several Hamilton justice initiatives, the Hamilton and District Public School Board, Out of the Cold, direct discretionary and food aid to locals in need, breakfast programs, etc. etc. Lately, the Cathedral has been the engine in new shared events, such as the local horticultural society's huge nave-filling display, or the enormously successful Art Crawls. Many who read this report might extend this list and demonstrate that Cathedral has been a catalyst in a strong process of renewal in one of the Canada's most financially poorest neighbourhoods.

That Cathedral Place is historically designated as one of Hamilton's oldest church buildings and finest examples of 19th century architecture is both a challenge and a blessing. But it is a reminder that we are charged to hold a richly valued part of the history of the whole region in our care. For us as a Diocese, though, the place is central in the story of the Canadian Anglican church: a story that - informed by the lessons of time - continues to be written today.

Clarity on Blessings and Challenges

As the committee seeks to fulfill Synod's mandate to it, they continue to consider:

- without negating the good work that has been accomplished at Cathedral place, there remains an accumulated material infrastructure deficit. The further deferral of several items will result in more expensive than if they were repaired, yet these concerns are only one of many for which our combined resources are needed: if Diocesan administration and leadership's response is one of austerity, this arises out of a genuine desire to reduce financial pressure on parishes
- a respect for the Cathedral congregation whose per capita giving leads the Diocese, but whose shared use of what was "their" facility limits their freedom to explore income-generating alternatives. Further, it is little understood that, since the inception of the jointly owned Cathedral Place arrangement, financial endowments previously exclusively designated to the former Cathedral parish have been exhausted on a shared basis
- overcoming a lack of understanding in other congregations of the mutual impact of the unique shared occupancy - two sets of shared priorities in one facility (Cathedral place is neither a Diocesan office with a Cathedral attached, nor a parish housing Diocesan offices... it is both, and an amalgamation of assets to accomplish both)
- the operational costs of the facility are transparently disclosed as a part of the Diocesan Budget - the Cathedral is no longer a "parish" as such since its larger finances are controlled differently - integrated into the rigorous budget process of Diocesan Synod.

Feedback in 2012/13

In anticipation of the creation of the task force, the mover and seconder of the original motion conducted a survey of Synod and Synod Council's membership. The sum of the feedback can be fairly represented as encouragement to continue in the Cathedral Place arrangement, increase awareness of how much goes on in our Diocese, and find an equitable way to make it work. A synthesis of the questions and results is below.

Interim Recommendations

- that Cathedral Place, in the committee's considered opinion, is here to stay. Its benefits are demonstrated, and the alternatives to this combined use are not clearly viable, financially nor spiritually
 - that all reasonable efforts be made to foster the understanding that the cost of operating Cathedral place is a part of - and not in competition with - the cost of doing ministry as a Diocese
 - that Synod Council - at the Bishop's pleasure - assemble a task force in keeping with the original motion
 - that Synod Council also mandate the task force to research any revenue-generating alternatives for Cathedral Place and bring these to Synod Council for consideration, cognizant of:
 - the stated priority of Cathedral Place's ability to continue to serve in our shared mission as a Diocese
 - any material deficit in the building that we are currently not addressing
 - the alleviation of the financial pressures Cathedral Place share as a part of the Diocese
 - the legacy of past endowments of the Cathedral be restored to future generations
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Appendix: Survey Responses: a synthesis of responses

1. Please name the program or work that you feel best demonstrates the benefit of the work and mission of the Cathedral/Cathedral Place using, for example, Niagara's Vision as a frame of reference.
 - No response
 - Life-Changing Worship: the Cathedral congregation is a liturgical leader and innovator, flexible and creative use of space and configuration, music, variety of language: a place for good ideas and makes sense to have it all in one place
 - the breakfast program - lives our commitment to care for one another
 - as someone who has grown up and been part of a variety of parishes and places in the Diocese, I have a strong attachment to the Cathedral as the one constant - it's architecture, beauty, sense of calm, memories, associations, people: these are a part of my faith development, and this place is "home" to me.
 - I'm unaware of the programs and work of the place. The cathedral is remote to me, its importance is that it's the place from which the bishop leads and administration is done. The hall has a bad sound system, poor lighting and uncomfortable chairs...
 - the Cathedral is a model of Outstanding Leadership in one of the highest needs areas of our Diocese, fostering social Justice where it is needed the most. Good to have this place available to people who need it the most.
 - In my former Diocese I had very little to do with the Cathedral. Here, I have been very much at Cathedral Place with several new involvements that have shown me the benefit of having a central place where parishes can work together and combine resources to created viable events where lack of scale locally makes it impossible to do alone.
2. What are the greatest benefits of having a the Cathedral and Diocesan Resource Centre consolidated into one operation?
 - easy access to people and resources all under one roof
 - economic benefit of two operations under one roof and transparent reporting via Synod
 - consolidation of operations brings some relief to over-stretched Diocesan staff
 - proximity of daily work to relevant leaders and staff is important
 - Anglican presence and identity in the heart of our Diocese - a united point of witness to who we are and what we about
 - I have no idea, sorry.
 - Combining the use of this facility is effective resource management, maximizing use of the building for so many things and shows innovative thinking.
 - I don't see the benefits or impact of combining things because I'm mostly here for ordinations, confirmations, Order of Niagara services and Myler Hall just seems like the Cathedral's parish hall.
3. What do you see as the most important challenges in this consolidation, or in the way this consolidation is understood in the Diocese?
 - overcoming the disconnect - getting people to come and see what's going on there!
 - how do we determine a fair sharing of costs of operations and foster just decisions about this? How do we overcome competition for the same space and resources? What does "we" look like when competing uses or conflict arises?
 - the perennial challenge of being communion and not congregational, which is not unique to this place... "us and the Diocese" vs. "we are a part of the Diocese and it is us."

- stewardship - hard for parishes who are struggling to fund their own places of worship to be a part of (support) the greater Diocesan operations
 - as the terms of this consolidation are not known or understood, there are no implications for me, good or bad.
 - hard to distinguish what's the Cathedral Parish and what's the Diocesan Centre: people don't see that they get lumped together
 - its frustrating to have the cathedral called a "black hole". It's our home and its mortgage free. We're blessed to have it, unlike many other Dioceses around the world, yet we complain about it.
4. Please make constructive recommendations to aid the Diocese of Niagara in extracting the maximum benefit from the asset currently known as "Cathedral Place".
- we under-utilize the resources and opportunities that are there because we don't know what they are
 - I tend to find my own resources online so do not access material from the central office
 - the building has to pay its own way
 - we need an evaluation of how much we can realistically do, how many groups we can accommodate, and whether some of them could be contributing more to the cost of operating the facility, keeping the lights on, wear and tear, etc.
 - process for all stakeholders to be heard and understood
 - offer a cost-benefit analysis of consolidated vs. separate operations and only consider a change if indicated
 - if we pare back the centralized functions of the Diocese in order to take financial pressure off parishes, will the various regions respond by working together on the vision initiatives in their areas and communities? Or, where we cannot fund or staff an initiative on our own, does it make more sense to join in something collectively as a Diocese?
 - disagree with the premise that Cathedral Place is a key Diocesan asset. It holds little relevance to us except as an administrative centre. This could be addressed by a kind of "pilgrimage" program in which the Cathedral Place could offer a positive representation of the way it lives the vision and people could have a relationship with the cathedral. (Several ideas offered about more Diocesan visits in the place).
 - This is one of our most important places of ministry and we need to ensure its well resourced.
 - Help people understand this is their cathedral - get the story out, especially to places far away
 - tours, new programs to get people to connect, or new ways to get people to connect with existing program.