

## Diocese of Ontario

**THE LOCAL CHURCH****The Mission of the Church**

The ways in which we live out our mission as the Church are defined in our responses to the questions in the Baptismal Covenant. We commit ourselves:

- To be faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers;
- To persevere in resisting evil and, when we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord;
- To proclaim, by word and example, the Good News;
- To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- To strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

Although we respond to the questions in the baptismal covenant as individuals, our commitment is corporate as well. We live our faith in community. That community, the Anglican Church, has a particular culture that is reflected in our liturgy, music, and governance.

**Leadership in the Church**

Leaders do not come into a church as blank slates. We bring with us a broad range of knowledge, skills, and experience. Indeed, it is essential that a church utilize these resources in managing its money, caring for facilities, working with people, planning for the future, collecting information, and many other aspects of our corporate life. We cannot, however, forget the mission of the Church and our identity as members of the Anglican Church.

It would be easy to evaluate our congregational life by how many members we have, how big our facilities are, or our average gift per identifiable giver. Yet it is quite possible to grow in all these ways, and still fail in our basic purpose. In addition to counting people and things, we need to measure our progress in accomplishing our mission. Some people worry that doing so may lead to fewer members, less money or a lack of adequate attention to buildings, programs and the fabric of the community. On the contrary, stewardship – of time, talent, and all sorts of treasure – is a critical aspect of both our individual and corporate Christian lives. Many congregations have discovered that focusing on the mission of the Church results in more temporal accomplishments as well.

**The Local Church and the Wider Church**

“The Church that lives to itself will die by itself.” This pointed declaration of the Archbishop of Canterbury made during his address at the Anglican Congress in 1963 is true for a congregation and a diocese. We are members one of another and the Churchwardens, Lay Representatives to Synod and Incumbents of congregations are the key people in the relationship between the local parish and the wider life of the Church.