

Diocese of Fredericton Clergy Conference

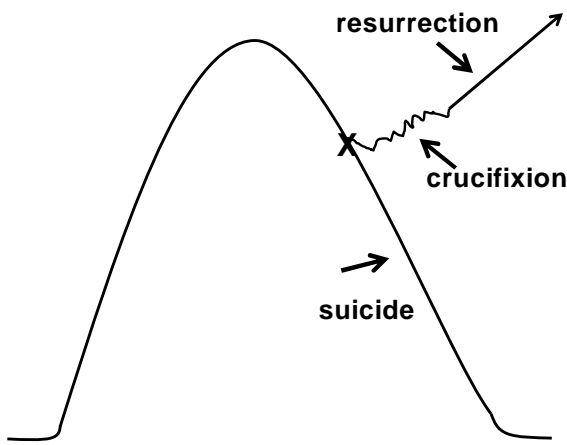
August 27-29, 2012

Basic assumptions for our time together:

The facts as I see them . . .

- ASA 34 and dropping
- Average age 60+
- Barring dramatic change, at least two-thirds of the present congregations will cease to exist by 2020 . . . perhaps more
- The present diocesan structure will be unsustainable by 2015

You are at a crossroads!



Four Futures for Congregations

	Strong	Weak	Dying
Small < 150			
Middle < 750			
Large, Regional < 1800			
Mega > 1800			

Weak or dying is not the result of being a certain size . . . it results from a way of thinking, planning and acting.

The twenty-first century is the century of the small, strong church.

SMALL IS STRONG!

Small, strong churches are filled with Easter people claiming the promise of new life – they are not preoccupied with not dying.

Areas of strength in small, strong congregations

- Mission and service
- Compassion and shepherding
- Community and belonging
- Self-reliance and self-sufficiency
- Worship and hope
- Leaders and team
- Just enough space and facilities
- Giving and generosity

The small, strong churches know that the strengths they have are God's gifts and that He invites them to grow stronger, not bigger, using the following process:

1. Claim your strengths
2. Expand one current strength
3. Add one new strength
4. Act

Session I – Caring

- Mission and Service
- Comparison and Shepherding

Session II – Conserving

- Community and Belonging
- Self-reliance and Self-sufficiency
- Worship and Hope

Session III – Coping

- Leaders and Team
- Self-reliance and Self-sufficiency
- Giving and Generosity

Small, strong churches focus on matching the strength God gives them with the community God gives them.

HELP – HOPE – HOME
The steadfast love of God

"Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift. That is why we call it the present."

Author unknown



Session I - Caring

Mission and Service

"Go and preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary."

Francis of Assisi



**Mission not Maintenance
Service not Survival**

Small, strong churches share one compelling mission with considerable competence, compassion, and continuity . . . and they do it as a gift to their community. Their focus is on others, not themselves.



Small, strong churches are "good Samaritan" congregations.

Small, strong churches are:

- **strength-driven, not weakness-driven**
- **spirit-driven, not size-driven**
- **gift-driven, not getting-driven**

They are mission-minded.

Your community is one of the richest mission fields on this planet.

"Go and preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary."

Francis of Assisi

Compassion and Shepherding

**Maiream croi eadrom I bhfad.
(A light heart lives long.)**

Irish saying

Small, strong churches are strong not because of the compassion and shepherding they share with others in the congregation, but because of the generosity with which they share their compassion in the community.

Small, strong churches are not interested in:

- **vision statements**
- **congregational growth**
- **denominational welfare**

"Help us find a pastor who will come and love us and whom we can come to love."

"Now abideth faith, hope, and compassion, these three, but the greatest of these is compassion."

1 Corinthians 13:13 KJV

Small, strong churches are high-compassion congregations because they are high-forgiving congregations. They have learned that compassion without forgiveness is only sentiment.

A loving heart is warm and forgiving, tender and caring, thoughtful and kindly. A loving heart does not think too much of itself – it is not puffed up. It does not fuss or bicker over minor matters. It is not caught in selfishness, egotism, and greed. It is not preoccupied with its own advantage, prestige, and power. It has left those things behind.

Maiream croi eadrom I bhfad.
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Questions?

Breakout Session