

# Diocesan New Year's Message 2015

## DIOCESAN NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE - 2015

Evangelism will be a key focus for the Anglican Diocese of Belize in the New Year, growing out of a lot of what our recent synod recommended. However, the matter of reconciliation - repairing broken relationships, healing old wounds, giving and receiving forgiveness, being open to God's forgiveness - remains something that affects not only the church but the wider society. Specific to the church, it is CRITICAL to our efforts at effective evangelism and outreach.

Subsequently, 2015 will have as a significant focus a call to take more seriously the Sacrament of Reconciliation, already available to us in our Liturgy. At every one of our worship services we have a moment for Confession and Absolution. May we, in the coming months, double our efforts to proclaim in word and deed, the beauty of being reconciled one to another. I Corinthians 5:18-19 says to us, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."

It is also noteworthy to recognize that the road to unity, or a more unified approach to our corporate life as a Church, is often paved with the willingness to seek reconciliation, to repair the brokenness in our lives through receiving or granting forgiveness to each other.

The theme of our last Synod in 2014 was "We journey together; We achieve together – with Christ". This theme continues to be

what must now shape our efforts in moving forward. The call of Synod is unmistakable: we must work together in order to achieve success in what we do, keeping our Lord ever before us as our guide and sustainer.

This is the mind with which we now greet the New Year. The challenge ahead for us is great, but so are the opportunities. Working together is not always an easy thing to do as it requires making sacrifices, being less selfish and more willing to share resources, knowledge and experience, and, most importantly, recognizing that we labor for the good of all. It is the proverbial dictum: 'a chain is only as strong as its weakest link'.

Yet, beyond enjoying greater success when we are willing to work together for the common good, the picture of unity presented to the wider community becomes a powerful tool in our witness to the gospel. Our efforts at effective evangelism are greatly enhanced when we undertake the endeavor with a shared purpose and goal.

On another front and something of significant interest for 2015, is the recognition that the diocese now has to take a much greater responsibility for its own upkeep and sustenance. This is the result of the fact that an increasing number of our traditional donor agencies and financial supporters (particularly from abroad) are no longer in a position to assist us as they did in the past. Indeed, we are aggressively seeking to attract new partners in mission and ministry but this process will be greatly enhanced with the support of our various congregations. One of the several ways congregations can play their part is to meet their financial obligations to the Diocesan Headquarters substantially through the paying of their annual assessments.

Diocesan Headquarters, we must remember, exists primarily to enable ministry to take place throughout the diocese via (i) the daily management of the affairs of the diocese; (ii) the supply,

support and payment of clergy and their stipends; (iii) the organizing of retreats, workshops and seminars for clergy and laity alike; (iv) the facilitation and development of partnerships both at home and abroad with friends and supporters; (v) the fulfilling of our regional obligations to the Province of the West Indies; and (vi) the faithful stewardship of what we sometimes refer to as the "Anglican Brand" - that is, how is the Anglican Church perceived in the wider community, what is it known for, what is it celebrated for? What is unique and beautiful about what the Anglican Church brings to the expression of the Christian Faith?

We are all owners of this 'Anglican Brand'. What are each we doing to cherish and promote it? How effective are we in this endeavour?

We will be calling on all Anglicans in the land to join us in this effort. Let us, my sisters and brothers, labour faithfully in the part of God's vineyard He has granted us the privilege and opportunity to work.

God bless.

+Philip Belize