

Meeting of fellows at St. John's College with the Theological Commission  
November 12, 2014

Question: What do you perceive defines the current identity of St. John's College?

Answers:

- Since 1981 when I began at the College, the sense of Anglicanism has decreased. It used to be an important criteria for joining, but now no one is asking the fellows about their faith or knowledge of Christianity
- You can't ask that question anymore. We can't run a program unless churches send us their students
- The interdisciplinary culture of the College is part of our identity
- Yes, the co-operative element among fellows
- The chapel, chaplain, and government (people appointed by Diocese)
- Canadian studies
- The day to day life of the community of the college. The day to day life of those in various fields. To engage with professors on a day to day basis who have so much to offer. Sanctuary. A quiet place to do the work.
- A small caring community. Personal touch. Smaller size within bigger community
- Scholarships, the library's collections of theological journals and books, resources for delivering courses and programs. College has a charter for degrees. Has a history that goes back to 1840s. Long history of education Aboriginal people. Various services, library services.
- Overt Anglican presence has diminished, but on a subtle level is felt. Convocation. Presence of bishop. Presence of clergy in college. Makes you aware of the fact that this is an Anglican institution. Diocese isn't exploiting resource of college as much as it might
- College developed program for training clergy. Students diminished. Used to run training for First Nations as summer course. Disappeared. Correspondence courses are being used without acknowledgment of foundation in college. When first came to college was robust, but things went to St Chad's in Saskatchewan. Diocese has not financially or people-wise supported the college as it might have done in the last 40 years.
- The life of the university is more than just a means to an end or an economic tool. We share meals, engaging on a personal and intellectual level. A holistic learning and work environment is more than just the academic
- I have the sense that we're here to serve the Diocese, but we haven't been able to serve Diocese because there aren't people to serve. How are we to answer what we would like to do for the Diocese? We're ready to go without anything to do
- Size, interdisciplinary, and scholarships.
- The reasons I came to St. John's were: 1) Parish rector recommended 2) dean of residence went to school as part of orientation session and talked personally to me about advantages. The personal touch has disappeared.

- We can fantasize about 50s and 60s, but in 2014 the request that clergy come up with young people to send to the College is just a dream
- Speaking as priest of university students, I always suggest U of M students should look at St John's. Access to smaller classes, scholarships, residence life. Space also to sleep and study.
- I have developed community here as an economist and human being. There is natural competition within one's own discipline which can prevent human relationships from developing. Here you can have arguments and it's part of the good cheer. It is intellectually stimulating and enables us as professionals to be more productive than if we stayed in our departments.
- There are many traditions associated with college, not only theology. (such as Canadian studies). Were times when that was a dominant influence. Different ways of looking at history than just starting as training of clergy

Question: What do you think it means to be an Anglican College in the secular 21st century? What could the College contribute to the University and the Diocese? Is there a desire within this community to strengthen relations with the Diocese?

Answers:

- We should train priests as well as intellectual leaders in society and in Manitoba. We serve the university with lecture theatres, classrooms, and resources.
- University doesn't leverage our contributions enough
- The chapel and the possibility of services, provides something that UMSU doesn't give.
- It is a miracle that the Anglican church contributes to university life. It contributes to the pluralism which the university strives for.
- Professionally, there are more losses than gains for fellows by making the move to St. John's, but we choose to put communal needs above professional needs.
- At one time the commitment of fellows was stronger than it is now and the past 15 years or so.
- a narrower intellectual contribution would be welcome if we had theologians on the staff.

Question: Do we need to remain an Anglican College?

Answers:

- Administratively it would be a loss because we have benefited from tension between diocese and us, and us and university. Being Anglican has given us an individuality to hold onto that the university respects. If we were no longer Anglican, we might likely be subsumed by the university.
- If we lost the Anglican environment, it would be one less option to students.
- If we weren't Anglican, it wouldn't serve my needs. I hope this commission is in favour of strengthening the ties between the diocese and the

university

- Chapel, Anglicanism, theological study; these are all different now. We probably can't make them what they once were.
- As non-Anglican, it wouldn't matter to me if there was a distancing from Diocese on an identity level. However, I don't understand the relationships in this particular historical trajectory.
- There was a college in Ottawa that ceased to be religious and was simply subsumed by the university.
- Elsewhere, a Roman Catholic presence is established by Roman Catholic courses. We tried that here, but it didn't work.
- That's not entirely true. The courses were given by the university, not the college, in that case.
- St. John's can offer both Bachelors of Theology and Master's of Divinity.
- As a visiting fellow, I enjoyed the library because there were Anglican materials. I lamented that there wasn't more of a chapel life. The communal aspect of the college does what Church is all about. I would love it if there was a theologian here; it would make the place complete. I don't want everyone to become Anglicans; in fact, we should be more diverse (we need more scientists), but we need someone to carry on the theological tradition. At its best it is a very rich and generative tradition.
- Should we hire our own theologian?
- There would be nothing for them to teach. That would never work.
- Our decisions shouldn't be based on lack of money. If there's the commitment and determination, the funds can be raised.
- While it's true that there's no going back to 1960, with six theologians and a rich theological environment, there's never been hostility to theology. People just don't know what the Diocese wants from us or where we fit with them. We need clarity.
- For a lot of the fellows here this is a rich intellectual environment. An island in this bureaucratic structure. Why change it?
- There may be a third option. Rather than hiring an academic theologian, we might have a priest/scholar in residence. Because clergy are supposed to do further education and sabbaticals, three months may be reasonable. The priest could come, get resources, and have people to engage with in conversation.
- Yes, the bishop did something similar over the summer. There used to be more clergy coming and going.
- Formalizing it as a program, or something you could apply to be a part of, would be really important. If people knew they were being welcomed into conversation, they would jump at the opportunity.
- Unfortunately, in today's climate the question would be "Who the hell are you?"
- What does the Diocese want from St John's?
- The activity of the College in the life of the Church has changes every decade. The College has survived despite all obstacles and will continue to.

- I hope the appendix to your report has a comprehensive guide to the theological education available online and elsewhere. St. John's could maintain such a list and even create a program which pulls together courses from all over the place.