



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Donald Phillips,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

Saturday September 30, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Earlier today I informed the Diocesan Council meeting that, after prayerful discernment over the past year, it is my intention to retire as diocesan bishop sometime in the next 12 to 18 months. It is definitely premature to begin "wrapping things up" in our diocese. Please receive this as a "notice of intention to retire" as opposed to a retirement notice!

The reason for taking action at this time comes out of considerable thought, prayer and consultation with some clerical and lay leaders about the best route through this "episcopal transition." Following the example of several other Canadian dioceses, we believe that electing a Co-Adjutor bishop while I am still in office is the best way both to ensure a smooth transition and also to help orientate the incoming bishop. While some dioceses build in a longer overlap with the two bishops, in our case I would plan to step down one to two months after the Co-Adjutor bishop begins his/her work. (According to the Provincial Canon – a Co-Adjutor bishop is similar to a Suffragan Bishop except that the Co-Adjutor immediately (and automatically) become the Diocesan Bishop as soon as the current bishop leaves office.)

However, there are some extra procedures to which we need to adhere. In order for a diocese in the Province of Rupert's Land to elect a Co-Adjutor bishop, it needs the permission of the Province via the Metropolitan. This request needs to come from our Diocesan Synod – not merely Diocesan Council. So, this means that we need to hold a brief meeting of Synod in order to begin this process.

The Metropolitan must submit our request to elect a CoAdjutor bishop to a meeting of the Provincial Synod if the request is received within 6 months preceding a meeting of the Provincial Synod. Otherwise, the Metropolitan submits the request to the Provincial Executive which is meeting in mid-November, 2017. Our next Provincial Synod is not until May 3, 2018. Therefore, to enable the Metropolitan to submit this request to the Provincial Executive Council, we must call together our Diocesan Synod to consider this proposal prior to Nov. 3, 2017.

As per our Canons, I am convening a **special Session of Synod on Saturday October 21** in the context of Faith Horizons with the business commencing at the conclusion of Faith Horizons. I consulted with the Diocesan Council meeting and there was a strong consensus to hold the Synod following Faith Horizons as opposed to holding a separate gathering on October 28. I am deeply conscious of the shortness of this notice, but in consultation with others, it was thought that giving our Diocese the ability to set its own timeline in the process (and not having to wait for the May 2018 meeting of Provincial Synod) warranted this course of action.

Naturally, I have very mixed feelings about initiating this decision and process. I am (and will continue to be) deeply grateful for the great sense of partnership in the Gospel I share with each of you. Please keep our Diocese and myself in your prayers.

With much appreciation and affection,

Donald Phillips, PhD

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