

Joint working group report

Submitted by a joint working group from the
Anglican Journal
and
Communications & Information Resources
Coordinating Committees

Members:

Canon Ian Alexander, Diocese of British Columbia
Bishop William Cliff, Diocese of Brandon
The Rev. Dr. Karen Egan, Diocese of Montreal
Ms. Meghan Kilty, Director of Communications, General Synod
Ms. Tess Sison, Editor, *The Anglican Journal*

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Background summary of the presenting issue

Rupert's Land request and timeline

In February 2015, both the then-editor of *Rupert's Land News* and the Diocesan Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Donald Phillips, communicated to *Anglican Journal* staff of the General Synod that, effective that September, the diocese would no longer publish a print version of their diocesan paper – a transition that had been in the works at least since the previous year. (Other dioceses have made decisions around print distribution to reflect their local contexts. See Appendix A.) The Diocese of Rupert's Land indicated that this decision was grounded in their focus on digital communications, a desire to concentrate available resources on editorial work, and Care for Creation. As part of the transition to a digital-only news service, the diocese made provision for PDF copies of the diocesan paper – in addition to the online blog format – to be available for download.

The February 2015 letter also indicated that as of January 2016, Rupert's Land would no longer be paying its share of the cost of distributing the *Journal*, and, having given the appropriate contractual notice, made the understandable but false assumption that print distribution of the *Journal* in that diocese would automatically cease at the same date.

In the late summer of 2016, Bishop Phillips indicated to the Director of Communications, Ms. Meghan Kilty, that the diocese was questioning the continued print distribution of the *Journal* in the diocese given their focus and commitments. That fall, Bishop Phillips communicated to the General Secretary, the Ven. Michael Thompson, and the Director of Communications that the Council had decided that the Diocese of Rupert's Land no longer wanted the print version of the *Anglican Journal* distributed in the Diocese of Rupert's Land.

Implications

Questions concerning governance

Some General Synod staff in the *Anglican Journal*, and (in an email) the president of the Anglican Editors Association, objected to the Rupert's Land request and asserted that a diocese could not reject a "national ministry" like the *Anglican Journal*. They raised these objections with the General Secretary and questioned whether this was a governance issue.

In December 2016, Thompson and Kilty asked both the General Synod Chancellor, Mr. David Jones Q.C., and the staff in the General Synod Archives whether this was a governance issue and/or whether there is a General Synod policy that would prohibit the Diocese of Rupert's Land from making such a request. The Chancellor concluded that the distribution of the *Anglican Journal* is not a governance issue. The General Synod Archives also concurred that, although there is a relationship in terms of distribution that exists between the General Synod and the dioceses, there was no resolution or policy that mandated a diocese to accept the *Journal* or participate in its distribution. The distribution arrangement was a management and partnership decision.¹

¹ In December the Chancellor noted that as this issue could have far-reaching impacts within the church and for the *Journal*, this request would be best discussed at both the *Journal* and Communications Coordinating Committees and at a meeting of CoGS.

Distribution

Although the Diocese of Rupert's Land ceased print publication of *Rupert's Land News*, the General Synod continues to distribute the *Journal* in the diocese. In consultation with the Anglican Journal Circulation/Business Manager it was determined that, although there was an assertion by staff that the diocese was to continue paying for distribution costs, the distribution contract allowed any diocese to cease print distribution with six months notice without financial penalty. Accordingly, the diocese no longer bears the print distribution costs of the *Journal*.²

Initial Net Cost Exercise: Print distribution

A rigorous analysis in consultation with the General Synod Chief Financial Officer needs to take place to understand the current distribution model's associated costs. As an initial reference, Appendix B is a preliminary outline of high-level costs for print distribution for the *Journal* pulled from the 2016 budget actuals.

Content and editorial & structural Independence

As the working group soon acknowledged, it is difficult if not impossible to have a useful conversation about questions of distribution of the *Journal*, without also talking about its content -- and in particular, its mandate of editorial and structural independence and its place in the overall communications strategy of General Synod.

Strong arguments can and have been made over the years for the continued editorial and structural independence of the *Journal*. Questions have also been asked about whether this independence is perceived, effective, and valued by readers, and where it sits in the current priorities of General Synod.

The working group wishes CoGS to be aware that it intends to revisit these issues in the course of its work -- consulting closely with all key stakeholders.

² The General Secretary underlined that the General Synod will not hold a diocese to a covenant that is not in the diocese's best interest. This is not the only diocese with this distribution arrangement.

The Working Group

Introduction

The request from the Diocese of Rupert's Land that the *Anglican Journal* cease print distribution in that diocese represents both a challenge and an opportunity, in that it raises important fundamental questions about future distribution of Anglican newspapers in general, at both the diocesan and national levels. Some of these questions are listed in Appendix C.

In an effort to respond, the two relevant standing coordinating committees (*Anglican Journal* and Communications) formed a joint working group, which has met once in person and once by conference call, to prepare this submission to CoGS. The group is seeking input from CoGS as it continues its work, and for recommendations and engagement from the Council. The joint working group anticipates a final report with findings and recommendations for CoGS to consider, likely in Fall 2018, with a preliminary or interim report between now and then.

Membership

The joint working group currently consists of the chairs of the two relevant coordinating committees, plus another member of CIRC, the Director of Communications, and the Editor of the *Journal*. We are seeking to recruit a second member of the *Journal* Committee. Ideally, this would be someone with experience editing a diocesan paper.³

Mandate

The working group proposes for CoGS' consideration the following three-fold mandate:

1. Recommend a further interim response to the Diocese of Rupert's Land with regard to its request. The recommendation may include options and implications.
2. Undertake a process of research and consultation leading to the development of options for a future distribution model for the *Anglican Journal*. The work will be fact-based, informed by broad consultation with stakeholders, take into account current and anticipated technological and socio-economic trends, and present options, with pros and cons, that are both equitable and flexible.⁴
3. Consider the implications of #2 for the future strategic directions of the ACC's internal and external communications strategies, including tactics, structural models, delivery systems, and the most efficient and effective way of utilizing limited resources. This will include, as already noted, issues around the editorial and structural independence of the *Journal*.

³ The Anglican Editors Association (AEA) has requested official representation on the working group. As key stakeholders, we believe diocesan editors must be consulted and regularly informed in the course of our work. However, as only one of several stakeholder groups, we do not believe that the AEA should be singled out for formal membership.

⁴ It would be beyond the group's mandate to recommend future distribution models for any or all diocesan newspapers. However, what we learn about this subject during our consultations could be usefully shared across the church, and will inevitably influence options for the *Journal*.

Work Plan

Based on this draft mandate, the group has developed a preliminary work plan, which is very much a work in progress.

Activity	Description	Deadline / Deliverables
<i>Mandate #1: Response to Rupert's Land</i>		
Informal contact.	Working group member to initiate conversations.	Before COGS June meeting.
Draft letter.	Working group member to draft letter.	After COGS June meeting. See possible talking points in Appendix D.
<i>Mandate #2: Anglican Journal Distribution Models</i>		
1. Review existing research.	e.g. 2012 Reader Survey, 2011 Business Plan, 2013 Communications Review, current distribution statistics, Web metrics, literature review on editorial independence and accountability etc.	In progress now.
2. Net cost exercise.	Financial analysis of print vs. non-print distribution models.	In progress now. See Appendix B.
3. Conduct stakeholder consultation.	See Research Brief in Appendix E.	Design Summer 2017; In field Fall 2017; analysis of findings Winter 2017-18.
4. Commission targeted audience survey.		Interim report to COGS by Spring 2018; final report Fall.
<i>Mandate #3: National Church Communications Strategy and Structure</i>		
1. Further consultations.	Consult key ACC staff; gather information from other comparable organizations; decision-making modeling; seek expert guidance.	Interim report to COGS by Spring 2018; final report Fall.
2. Develop and test options.		

Communications Plan

It will be important to communicate about the working group's activities early and often; rumours already abound. The Director of Communications is preparing a communications plan, which will start to roll out right after the June 2017 COGS meeting.

Objectives

- Fulfill the mandate of the working group in a manner that is open, accountable, and transparent.
- Maintain regular communication with stakeholders and the church nationally.
- Engage in broad consultation with stakeholder groups.

Key stakeholders and audiences:

- House of Bishops (publishers of diocesan papers)
- Anglican Journal and Communications coordinating committees
- Council of General Synod
- Diocesan editors and communications officers/directors etc.
- Executive Officers
- Anglican Editors Association (as a body)

Tactics

- Direct communication (email, post)
- Web stories as appropriate
 - Circulated through email and on social media
- Presentations to CoGS

Measurement / KPIs

TBD

Workplan

TBD

Budget

A budget will be required for some travel and expenses by working group members and to commission research. The budget is currently in development. In consultation with the General Secretary and considering the importance of this issue, there will be funding available for this working group.

Appendix A: Inventory of diocesan newspapers

Diocese	Diocesan Paper (Yes, No, Joint, Digital)	Name of paper	Circulation (approx. / current)	Frequency
Anglican Military Ordinariate (extra- territory)	No	X	X	X
Algoma	Yes	Algoma Anglican	3773	10 times per year
Arctic	No	X	X	X
Athabasca	Joint (with Edmonton)	The Messenger	3605	10 times per year
Brandon	Yes	The Mustard Seed	1375	10 times per year
British Columbia	Yes	Diocesan Post	3621	10 times per year
Caledonia	Yes	Caledonia Times	550	10 times per year
Calgary	Digital only	The Sower	X	X
Central Newfoundland	Joint (All Nfld. Dioceses)	Anglican Life	18071	10 times per year
Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador	Joint (All Nfld. Dioceses)	Anglican Life	18071	10 times per year
Edmonton	Joint (With Athabasca)	The Messenger	3605	10 times per year
Fredericton	Yes	New Brunswick Anglican	5513	10 times per year
Huron	Yes	Huron Church Times	11408	10 times per year
Kootenay	Yes	The Highway	1810	10 times per year
Indigenous Spirituality of Mishamikoweesh	No	X	X	X
Montreal	Yes	Montreal Anglican	4256	4 times per year
Moosonee	Yes	The Northland	1092	4 times per year
New Westminster	Yes	Topic	5644	10 times per year
Niagara	Yes	Niagara Anglican	8220	10 times per year
Nova Scotia & PEI	Yes	Diocesan Times	8619	10 times per year
Ontario	Yes	Dialogue	3959	4 times per year
Ottawa	Yes	Crosstalk	7882	10 times per year
Territory of the People	No	X	X	X

Qu'Appelle	Joint (All Sask. Dioceses)	Saskatchewan Anglican	3612	10 times per year
Quebec	Yes	The Gazette	2203	10 times per year
Rupert's Land	Digital Only	Rupert's Land News	X	X
Saskatchewan	Joint (All Sask. Dioceses)	Saskatchewan Anglican	3612	10 times per year
Saskatoon	Joint (All Sask Dioceses)	Saskatchewan Anglican	3612	10 times per year
Toronto	Yes	The Anglican	21405	10 times per year
Western Newfoundland	Joint (All Nfld. Dioceses)	Anglican Life	18071	10 times per year
Yukon	No	X	X	X

Appendix B: Net Cost Evaluation

Revenue Description (2016 Actuals)	Approximate value
Primary Revenue Source	
Advertising Income	136,168
Donations Revenue	496,414
Diocesan Distribution Contribution (for sharing print distribution costs)	223,719
Heritage Canada Grant	409,866
Total Revenue	1,277,906

Expense Description (Print – 2016 Actuals)	Approximate value
Expenses	
Advertising Expense	31,726
Donations Expense - Diocesan Share (Journal Appeal)	168,190
Donations Expense - Donor Acquisition (Journal Appeal)	18,962
Donations Expense - Postage and printing (Journal Appeal)	52,631
Total	271,509
Total Salaries and Benefits for the Anglican Journal (for comparison purposes)	
Salaries (total)	481,638
Benefits (total)	149,701
Total	631,339

Salaries and Benefits (print distribution staff time)	
Salaries (1.75 FTE database clerk, 0.5 FTE Graphic Designer, 0.5 FTE Management)	101,000
Benefits (1.75 FTE database clerk, 0.5 FTE Graphic Designer, 0.5 FTE Management)	31,290
Total	132,290

Editorial and Production (Print)	
Promotion	1,554
Printing	160,425
Total Editorial and Production (Print)	161,979
Distribution	
Postage	803,830
Postage Returns	1,373
Postal Code Accuracy	3,118
Distribution Supplies	1,699
Total Distribution Expense	810,020
Administrative Expenses (print only)	
Database support to maintain circulation lists	4,736
Total Administrative Expenses (print only)	4,736
Total Expenses for the Anglican Journal (for comparison purposes)	1,959,379
Total Expenses for Print Distribution of the Anglican Journal	976,735

Appendix C: Preliminary list of questions

1. What are some of the challenges and opportunities presented by the Rupert's Land [decision / request]? How can we take advantage of the opportunities and respond to the challenges?
2. What do we know about the likelihood of other dioceses wishing to pursue a similar path, and over what time frame? How can we find out more about this? What are the potential implications of what we know or learn?
3. To what extent will the evolution of print communications in the Anglican Church of Canada tend to be synchronized across the country, or organized differently in different locations? For instance, is it reasonable to expect that all members of Anglican parishes in Canada will continue to automatically receive a print subscription to the *Anglican Journal* in three years from now? Five years? Ten years?
4. Given these present realities and future possibilities, what alternative print distribution models might the *Journal* need or want to consider? What are the pros and cons of each of them?
5. What would be some of the pros and cons of the *Journal* moving to digital-only distribution? Over what time frame? Is there relevant experience from other comparable publications that might help us address this question?
6. What current information do we have about *Journal* readership to help us address some of these questions, and what additional information do we need to gather?
7. What are some of the pros and cons of maintaining three separate communications entities for the ACC: an "official" one (anglican.ca/news), an "unofficial" one (thecommunity.anglican.ca) and an "editorially independent" one (the *Journal* and anglicanjournal.com)? Is now the time to revisit whether they should be more fully integrated in some way? If so, what might that look like? Are the answers to these questions dependent in part on predictions and/or decisions about the future of the print version of the *Journal*?
8. What other questions need to be asked?
9. What form of task force or working group ought to be created to address these and other related questions? What should be its mandate, reporting structure and time frame?
10. Can we use this opportunity to stimulate a conversation across the church nationally about the ways we communicate with our members and the wider world?

Appendix D: Possible talking points with Diocese of Rupert's Land

- Your letter raises issues that go beyond a single diocese, and have implications for the future distribution of the Anglican Journal (and by extension other diocesan newspapers) across the country. You have raised an important challenge, and created a valuable opportunity, for the Canadian church as a whole.
- In our initial response to your request, we expressed the hope that we could have a coherent response by the end of 2017. It has taken longer than we had expected to bring together a working group to engage the issue. This group is now formed and at work, and you have had some preliminary contact with them.
- We would like that dialogue to continue. In particular, we hope you can share with us any information you have gathered with regard to responses to the suspension of print distribution of the *Rupert's Land News* from Anglicans across the diocese. The working group would also like to explore with you the feasibility of alternatives in between the “all or nothing” options, e.g. “opt in” or “opt out” approaches.
- The working group has been given a mandate by CoGS to undertake a process of research and consultation leading to the development of options for the future distribution of the *Anglican Journal* across the country. The work should be fact-based, informed by broad consultation with stakeholders, take into account current and anticipated technological and socio-economic trends, and present options, with pros and cons, that are both equitable and flexible.
- We realize that you have been at this work in your diocese at least since 2014. The working group intends to release a final report by Fall 2018, and an interim report before that. We hope you can continue to be patient with us while this work unfolds.

Appendix E: Research Brief

The joint working group envisions two main pieces of original qualitative and quantitative research that it will need to design, commission, conduct and analyze.

1. Stakeholder Consultation

Consultation with key stakeholders (see sample questions included in Appendix C) which may include a questionnaire, focus groups, one-on-one interviews. Focus will be on the dissemination of church communications to internal and external audiences including:

- Special focus on print and on-line distribution models;
- Current practices, challenges and opportunities;
- Future hopes, fears, aspirations and plans.

2. Reader / User Survey

A statistically reliable, randomized survey of a representative cross-section of frequent readers and users of Anglican print and on-line communications, with regard to their current habits, preferences and future intentions.

The working group intends to collaborate actively with a qualified and experienced research expert on the design and execution of both these pieces of research. We hope to work with him on the design phase over the summer, so that we can have the research in the field as early as possible in the fall.