

THE 175th SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF HURON — POPULAR REPORT

May 15 - 17, 2016

Clergy and laity from across the Diocese of Huron came together in London from May 15 to 17. Bishop Bennett described the gathering of Synod as an opportunity to “discern and be attuned to the Creator’s will for us both in our particular time and within our unique context.”

The opening Eucharist’s first reading, from the Book of the Prophet Micah, set the tone for the three days, especially the well-known climactic verse in the book’s sixth chapter: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Bishop Dance helped the gathering to dig into this important passage, by facilitating a fun and enlightening Bible study on the Tuesday morning.

In his charge, Bishop Bennett pointed to the Baptismal Covenant (BAS 158-159) and the Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion as touchstones of the Christian lifestyle. He characterized the Christian life as a response to the call to “right relationship with God and between human beings and creation.”

It seems fitting, then, to present some highlights from this year’s Synod through the lens of the Marks of Mission.

TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

Archdeacon William Harrison spoke to the cultural shift evident in recent decades, which has resulted in a shrinking of many congregations. We can no longer depend on people gravitating to churches on Sunday morning by instinct or societal expectation. What’s needed today is more intentional evangelism. Evangelism (a word with much baggage) need not be left to slippery televangelists, he argued. Evangelism is simply the communication of God’s love for the world, as seen in Jesus Christ. Are we as a Church willing to work together and perhaps reevaluate our structures to most effectively articulate this reality? Moreover, are we able to remember, even in difficult times, that our physical structures and resources are not ends in themselves, but instead, tools that exist to serve our proclamation and living out of the Good News?

The First Mark of Mission was reflected in several other presentations. Huron’s Anglican Church Women spoke of their work and support of many important ministries, such as the Mission to Seafarers, Henry Budd College, and Huron Church News.

Huron Church Camp — a place where many young people come to know Christ — shared the good news of a surplus from 2015 and the start of much-needed renovations.

Special guests from our companion diocese, The Rev’d Marcos Fernando Barros de Souza and Maria de Lourdes Bernardino de Souza, shared how the partnership between Huron and Amazonia has helped them to recognize the divine energy that inspires them in their ministry in Brazil.

TO TEACH, BAPTIZE AND NURTURE NEW BELIEVERS

Bishop Bennett helpfully suggested that we should remember that we are called to nurture not just new believers, but *all* believers. Huron most certainly boasts many opportunities for Christian formation. Delegates received updates from Canterbury College, Huron University

College, and Renison University College. They are caring Anglican presences in the context of large universities, offering a variety of learning opportunities.

Education for Ministry (EfM) was presented as an outstanding example of the Anglican approach to Christian formation. Through four separate year-long courses students study scripture, Church history, and theology in an accessible manner and an encouraging environment.

Cursillo is another way in which the people of Huron might deepen their faith. Cursillo weekends are comprised of fifteen talks, with participants supported in the development of their own unique rule of life.

TO RESPOND TO HUMAN NEED BY LOVING SERVICE

The College of Deacons collected blankets from Synod delegates, and expressed enthusiastic thanks for the tremendous response.

Camp Wendake is entering its twentieth year. It provides fun and support for those whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS. Parishes were encouraged to support this ministry by considering the sponsorship of a camper.

The Rev'd Canon Greg Smith spoke to The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund's new initiative that focusses on maternal, newborn, and child health. He hopes that each parish will consider holding one or two fundraising events to support this cause.

Synod attendees also received an update on the work of the Diocesan Refugee Committee and the work of many parishes and deaneries in the area of refugee sponsorship. A highlight for many were the stories shared by Alaa Mokayed and Basel Yasbek, who came to Canada as refugees supported by St. Aidan's in London.

TO SEEK TO TRANSFORM UNJUST STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY, TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE OF EVERY KIND AND TO PURSUE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Synod heard from National Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald and representatives from Lenni Lenape Algonkian Iroquoian Council (LAIC) and the Bridge Builder ministry, which seeks to foster the restoration of relationships between settler and Indigenous peoples. Delegates were made aware of resources that have been created to facilitate engagement with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Dorothy Russell-Patterson shared about Brightening the Spirit, Breaking the Silence, a suicide-awareness program. The Rev'd Rosalyn Elm spoke about the importance of open, honest dialogue and prayer in her experience with the Bridge Builder ministry. Bishop MacDonald similarly underscored the need for fostering relationships rather than grasping at paternalistic strategies that undermine Indigenous self-governance. A motion to continue the ongoing work of the Bridge Builders was carried.

Social Justice Huron and the Justice League of Huron, which encompass several Diocesan ministries, promoted the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development, with a related prayer resource made available by the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. A motion was carried that asks parishes and deaneries to explore the Sustainable Development Goals and to consider focussing on one.

The Diocesan Youth addressed the issues of the underfunding of English (and French) as a Second Language programs, and the troubling living conditions of so many First Nations communities. They provided letters to be signed by Synod members, which were subsequently sent to government representatives in Ottawa.

A Lutheran-Anglican initiative, the National Worship Conference, was promoted. This year's conference takes place in Waterloo from July 24 to 27. Its keynote speakers, workshops, and liturgies will explore the connection between worship and justice-making. Information and registration is available at www.nationalworshipconference.org.

TO STRIVE TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION AND SUSTAIN AND RENEW THE LIFE OF THE EARTH

Synod delegates were encouraged to bring water bottles from home. The use of ceramic dishware at the barbecue reflected the Diocese's commitment to environmental responsibility. The EnviroAction Committee revealed that the Synod barbecue resulted in only a half bag of garbage.

St. James, Stratford was presented with both a light-green and a medium-green award for the congregation's work in environmental stewardship.

Several of the UN Sustainable Development Goals that were considered throughout Synod relate directly to the care of creation.

Congratulations to the Rev'd Karen Kovats and the Rev'd Dr. Timothy Dobbin, newly appointed to the Cathedral Chapter of Canons. Also, congratulations to the recipient of the Order of Huron, Canon Paul Rathbone, who was recognized for his ministry in administration and finance. Also, it is important to note that Synod ended with a heartfelt expression of gratitude to Bishop Bennett for his years of devotion to the life of the Diocese.

In her address to Synod, Bishop Nicholls warned against seeking quick fixes to the difficulties faced by the Church. Instead, she called for attentiveness to "a spirit of wisdom and revelation." She issued a challenge to those in attendance — one that applies equally to all the people of Huron: *This year find one new way to deepen your love and knowledge of Christ.*

How will you respond?

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Kieswetter