

## **Bishop's Charge to SYNOD 2017**

Let me begin my first charge to the Synod of the Diocese of Huron with profound thanksgiving to the clergy and people of the diocese. When I stood in your midst on the Monday of Synod 2016 I was a stranger who recognized a few faces and constantly had to ask 'Where is that?' when you introduced yourselves and told me about your parish. Over the past year you have welcomed me with warmth into congregations large and small in every corner of the diocese. I can now find most of our churches (with a little help from my GPS) and am learning to distinguish between the Saints that are towns and the Saints that are churches - St. James is IN St. Mary's! Though I do still have to ask you to tell me WHICH St. Paul's or St. George's you are from!

Everywhere I travel I meet Anglicans deeply committed to their parish, who share in worship and loving care of one another and the community with a feisty perseverance. This diocese has a deep sense of family across the diocese, especially among the clergy who have served in so many areas within it.

I come with no history among any of the parishes as I have not been a rector or curate in this diocese. I will never have a 'Chesley, Paisley & Tara' in Huron to remind you of, and will refrain from too many stories about Georgina, Thornhill, Toronto or Trent-Durham!

Over the past twelve months I have listened closely to diocesan leaders and staff, Archdeacons, clergy and laity. I have read and heard stories of our congregations, have worshipped with many, and shared in the joy of baptisms, confirmations and ordinations. I have reviewed the Vestry reports of every congregation for 2016 and examined the statistics of our diocesan life over the past ten years.

Now I want to share what I have seen and heard and experienced and set out my vision of our task together.

But first let us remember what we have shared in the diocese over the past year. We have:

- said farewell to Bishop Bob Bennett as Diocesan Bishop as he retired at the end of October 2016. And recently said farewell to Bishop Barry Clarke as he finished his time as Interim Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral
- grieved with Bishop Terry Dance and Diane and their family in the long, painful journey that led to the death of their daughter, Erin. The compassion and generosity of the diocese in prayer and gifts was remarkable.
- raised funds for our Cathedral as it faced significant building challenges. Through parish events, individual and parish donations we have showed our solidarity as a diocese in supporting the Cathedral. There are more to come in the next few months.
- Celebrated my welcome and seating in a service that witnessed to ecumenical friendship as Metropolitan United offered its space to us when the Cathedral was not available - a service that may be forever known as the one in which Bishop Linda was installed in 'her little house'!
- Installed our new Dean, the Very Reverend Paul Millward, last evening in our first opportunity to regather in the Cathedral after its repairs and to rejoice in Paul's new ministry.

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- rejoiced with parishes completing major projects such as St. George's & Epiphany in London and have shared the grief at the closure of a number of churches. We will take time to honour them later in our Synod.
- have seen some congregations share ministry in new ways - Good Shepherd Woodstock and Christ Church Huntingford; the Regional Ministry in Chatham
- Have welcomed numerous refugee families; and still have more to come
- listened to the needs of the community around us. We stood in solidarity with our Muslim Neighbours after the Quebec massacre in many communities; we spoke out to politicians about the safety issues at Oneida after the tragic fire last December
- committed to continue our education regarding indigenous peoples in our country. Many are sharing in the Blanket exercise as a starting place while others have shared in reading the TRC recommendations on national Aboriginal Day June 21, 2016.
- ordained new priests & deacons - Congratulations to the Revs. Shaun Eaton, Mark Sceviour, Matt Kieswetter, Mary Farmer, Jason Postma, Lorraine Brooks, John Thompson, Jean Woon, Steve Greene and Lisa Poultney! And we said farewell to others in retirement or moves - we will have a chance to honour some of them later.
- We will soon say farewell also to Archdeacon Bill Harrison & the Rev. Rita Harrison as they move to Saskatoon (again!) as Bill takes up a new, challenging ministry as the President of the Lutheran Theological Seminary there. And we will farewell in June, Joan Perrin who has served in our diocesan office in Payroll for many years. We wish them Godspeed in their new opportunities.

We have had a full year of comings and goings, celebrations and sorrows and change. Now we collectively take a deep breath as we think about where God is calling us next. The theme for this Synod and our year ahead is **One Body, One Spirit - Live a life Worthy of your Calling!**

We are one body in the one Spirit. We have been baptized into God's one, holy, catholic Church and live that calling within the Anglican Church of Canada in the Diocese of Huron. We are a part of the whole body of Christians in the world and a body of Anglicans called to work together within this large, beautiful diocese in southwestern Ontario. Our first and primary calling is to follow Jesus - to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength; to love our neighbour as ourselves; to proclaim God's Good News of love, forgiveness, dignity and justice - to be the light of Christ in the world.

We do that through the heritage of our Anglican Way - as communities within a diocese - a body in which each small town is part of the wider whole. What happens in Lion's Head matters in Wallaceburg. What is celebrated in Tobermory matters in Port Dover! Being Anglican is about core commitments to scripture, creeds, worship in continuity with the Book of Common Prayer, sacraments, and Episcopal leadership in Synod with clergy & laity. We have a rich heritage in our worship that makes space for mystery and awe with the participation of everyone; in our commitment to the community around us through outreach and justice work; in our engagement with scripture and theology that draws each of us to learn and grow. As Anglicans we are in communion with others across the world who are in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury - across Canada and the world- so we pray for and share

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life with our brothers and sisters in Amazonia - and South Africa - in the UK and the USA - In Brandon and the Arctic.

We are also a church in transition as we face change. For many the church of our youth no longer exists - full sanctuaries, overflowing Sunday Schools, large youth groups are rare today. There are many reasons one could cite for these changes - rural depopulation; social shifts; the church's own failures; our own inattention to the Gospel. We live in an era of distrust of institutional church; have moved from era of neighbourhood church on the corner - people don't walk to church; in the midst of many denominations; loss of confidence in gospel, young people moving away; small towns with 3 or 4 mainline denominations all of which have large buildings....

The list could go on and on and become more and more depressing. Whether we know the reasons or not, every congregation is at a critical point in its life. Longing for the past or complaining about the present or seeking someone to blame will not help us move forward. What will move us forward is our commitment to our purpose as followers of Jesus Christ in ways that are joyful, sustainable and lifegiving for everyone. Jesus did not plant buildings - He did call us to a relationship with God and relationships with one another expressed in worship and service.

**My vision** is that we will be a diocese of vibrant, sustainable communities of faith that offer holy and lively worship, that care for one another and the community around them and live the 5 Marks of Mission in all their activities.

Some will offer worship in churches of traditional design with pews, stained glass. well-trained lay participants, music that draws on the best of our hymn book/choral tradition, led by a full-time priest. Others will offer more informal approaches - in a rented space; shared church; or hall; - with simple musical accompaniment; led by a Lay Reader; with a priest for oversight and sacramental ministry. Others may be small intimate gatherings of Anglicans in a house - gathered around the dining table for eucharist or bible study in the living room. Some will have full-time stipendiary seminary trained clergy offering parish leadership, pastoral care, Christian education. Others will share clergy - maybe two or three across a regional ministry of several congregations. Others will have a part-time cleric - maybe shared with another congregation in your parish family or who works in other employment. In all congregations lay people will use their gifts to lead congregational life, offer pastoral care, assist in worship and proclaim the Good News. All congregations will reach out into their communities to tell the Good News - Evangelism - and to care for their neighbours.

**Vibrant in faith - and sustainable.** Sustainability requires that our models of ministry fit the resources we have available. Sustainability includes our commitment to the local congregation for its needs and our Anglican commitment, as one body in the Diocese, to our shared needs. The resources needed include the people to offer leadership in worship, service and administration; a space in which to worship and share events & programs that meets your needs; a priest to support your life as a parish and the financial resources to meet your commitments to the priest, building, ministry costs and shared costs of apportionment.

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To assist us to reach the goal of every parish vibrant and sustainable we want you to know that **TEAM HURON** is on your side!! Team Huron is the whole team of staff, Archdeacons, Regional Deans, committees and volunteers who are available to work with clergy and congregations to grow in vibrancy and sustainability. Anyone wearing a TEAM HURON button is part of the team! From the Bishop to all of the Archdeacons, to the new Stewardship Committee, Bishop's Committee on Ministry, to the Church Location Advisory Committee; to the Congregational Coaches; to the Regional Deans. Our commitment as TEAM HURON is to work with you for the sake of the strength of every congregation and the diocese as a whole.

To be vibrant & sustainable we will need every congregation engaged actively in looking at its future. We will need creativity, courage and a willingness to make changes. We will need discernment to know which model of ministry will work best in your community.

Each congregation will, over the next nine months, give birth to a mission & ministry plan that will engage clergy and laity in thinking about the life of their community and setting out their goals and plans, including for their buildings and financial sustainability. A template to assist in the process has been given to your clergy as a starting place. The plan will include your commitments to the 5 Marks of Mission, not only those you currently engage, but also those you need to dream for. It asks for a multi-year plan for your buildings for maintenance, renovation or repair, accessibility & suitability for ministry long term. Lastly the plan will include a financial plan for sustainability.

**EVERY PARISH** must show its capacity to meet: a balanced Budget; full apportionment paid; full stipend/housing paid; and not be drawing on the capital of reserves for annual operating costs. This may be a big leap for some - if not achievable in one year: a plan, with benchmarks, showing how you will work towards that will be necessary.

If you need assistance with the plan **TEAM HURON** is here to help!

I promise that Church House staff are working to keep the Diocesan Budget within the parameters set by Synod. As you can imagine with the closure of some churches we have fewer resources to work with. We have had and will have some staff changes through retirement or moves that offer assistance. We will only have one bishop. I am deeply grateful to the Archdeacons who are taking on more responsibilities to assist us.

I look forward to seeing your Mission & Ministry plans after your next Vestry meetings in 2018! God is at work in our midst and will lead us into new possibilities in ministry. Be realistic about your capacity...Be creative about possibilities...be willing to fail and be willing to take some risks!

Alongside my vision for congregations are **four other key commitments** that will support and enhance our diocesan life.

**First is a commitment to discipleship.** Every Anglican is on the journey of discipleship. For some, deliberate nurture and exploration of faith has been a part of daily life; for others Sunday worship has been the core. For many faith has been private and personal. We now live in a world where up to

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three generations of people have never heard the Christian Gospel, have never even been in a church. We need to be able to tell our story - the story of our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. We need to be able to tell it with joy & confidence! The study and exploration of our faith is essential. We shared the Five Marks of Love over Lent. I look forward to encouraging other opportunities for individuals and parishes to grow in faith.

I hear over and over the cry of '**where are the children?**' I can tell you where we do see the children and where the Diocese of Huron has a precious resource in ministry - and that is at **Huron Church Camp**. In an era when many dioceses have closed camps we still have a wonderful, lively camp that nurtures 400 children every summer and trains young adults in leadership. As someone who loves, and has been deeply formed and nurtured by, God's creation, the gift of the camp where lifelong relationships are formed, where the gospel is preached, lived and taught and where God is encountered in creation is a gift to which I am committed and pray that you are too.

A third commitment is to the **TRC Recommendations**. We are on a long journey of reconciliation with indigenous peoples in our diocese and our country. I asked congregations to engage in the blanket exercise this year as a starting point to not only hearing the history of our country with our minds but experiencing the history with our hearts. That is one step. As a well-known collect of the prayer book says, 'read, mark learn and inwardly digest' that history so that we may listen with fresh ears to what reconciliation needs to look like today. I pray that the indigenous communities in Huron, including Oneida, Muncey, Walpole Island, Kettle Point and Six Nations will help us to take the next step.

The fourth commitment is to **our share in the life of the Church locally and globally**. We are delighted to have Bishop Saulo de Barros with us at Synod again. Our companionship with the Diocese of Amazonia is helping us hear the life of the wider church in a new way.

We also have a team from **the Diocese of Brandon** with us for this Synod. As part of our commitment to engage in consideration of the marriage canon, which passed first reading at General Synod last summer, I invited Bishop Bill Cliff (familiar to many!) and four members of the Diocese of Brandon to share in an opportunity for listening and discussion. We have not often taken the time to hear our brothers and sisters in Christ within Canada and I am grateful for this opportunity. A team of four laity and clergy from our diocese has met with the Brandon lay and clergy team over the last day and a half to begin our listening together. The Brandon team will tell us more about their diocese later this afternoon. In October I will go, with our team, to Brandon for their Synod to continue our dialogue.

## **SUMMARY**

We have remembered the past year with its joys and sorrows, celebrations and farewells.

I have shared my vision for our diocese and its congregations within our primary call as followers of Jesus Christ.

I have shared my commitment to discipleship, Huron Church Camp, indigenous reconciliation and the wider church.

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Over today and tomorrow we will consider the life of our diocese in this synod in which clergy, laity and bishop consult together for the good of our calling as God's Church. We will hear the stories of ministry and work done in the diocese and among our affiliated ministries; we will consider changes to our canons needed to govern our life well; we will begin to consider our response to the Marriage Canon passed at General Synod 2016; and tonight we will enjoy an evening to honour recipients of the Order of Huron, hear from our neighbour, Bishop Michael Bird; and enjoy music, laughter and food together!

**We are one body in the one Spirit - working together so that we will live a life worthy of our calling** - a life that proclaims what we know of the Gospel; that lives it daily in our relationships; that declares it in worship; and is courageous in seeking models for ministry that are vibrant and sustainable. Thank you for your commitment to our shared calling.