

The 176th Synod of The Diocese of Huron
Popular Report
May 28 - 30, 2017

One Body - One Spirit: Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

Ephesians 4:1

On Sunday May 28th, beginning at 5 o'clock in the newly renovated St. Paul's Cathedral, London, The Rt. Reverend Linda Nicholls, Bishop of Huron, called the 176th Synod of the Diocese of Huron to order. As delegates across the diocese and beyond gathered for a time of worship, this year's gathering was particularly memorable for a number of firsts: it was our new Bishop's first synod with us at Huron; it represented our first opportunity to regather in St. Paul's Cathedral after the completion of the first stages of repairs of Project Jericho, and it also marked the occasion to celebrate the installation of its new Dean, the Very Rev'd. Paul Millward. This year's synod also included several special guests and close friends including The Rt. Rev'd Saulo Mauricio de Barros, The Rt. Rev'd Michael A. Bird, and our old friend The Rt. Rev'd William Cliff and his team from the Diocese of Brandon.

The charge of this year's synod and for the year ahead is **One Body, One Spirit - Live a life worthy of your calling!** What this theme realizes and celebrates is what we as Anglicans profess each and every Sunday in our creedal assertion: that we are baptized into God's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and in addition, Bishop Linda took this occasion in her charge to remind us that we are a part of the whole body of Christians in the world, and the world wide Anglican communion and are locally called to work together within this particular diocese located in south western Ontario. As Christians comprising one body and one spirit, "our first and primary calling is to follow Jesus - to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves." What Bishop Linda wishes to stress in her vision in this upcoming year 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 five Marks of Mission in all their activities."

Of course, we must recognize that we are living in 'interesting times': our church is in a period of transition, in part, having experienced a number of church closings, restructuring and realignment of parishes, as well as reimagining what ministry can look like in this day and age. As The Ven. William Harrision mentioned in his segment "What the Future Looks Like", we have transitioned in just over a decade where we have gone from 209 congregations in 2005, to where we stand today, or last year in 2016 with 178 congregations. While some of us may wonder if 'the elephant in the room' is the question which begs: "Is the Church dying?", or "are we coming to a time of levelling out?", what we need to focus on rather, is the fact that the *church is changing* and what it calls for us in order to continue living into the callings that we are called to is to respond creatively, courageously, and appropriately in proportion to the resources we have available and to what model of ministry will work best in each of our respective communities.

One of the ways that we will accomplish this objective lies in the work of visioning and planning; where this year, each parish over the next nine months will draw up a ministry and mission plan setting out their goals to meet the five marks of Ministry and Mission as well as including plans for their buildings and financial sustainability.

Throughout the course of this synod we heard from a number of speakers representing numerous ministries, committees, and missions through the diocese detailing ways that currently the diocese of Huron is living the Five Marks of Mission. On Tuesday, delegates of synod heard from The Rev'd Canon Greg Smith outlining the work of the Huron Hunger Fund and PWRDF, where since 2013, through the efforts of numerous fundraisers, over \$440,000 has been raised in partnership with our Aboriginal neighbours to provide clean, safe drinking waters in communities affected by unsafe water

advisory conditions and to provide waste water removal facilities. From Mr. George Henry, Chippewa of the Thames Council and his team representing the Justice League of Huron, we heard of the devastating effects to the environment and particularly the rivers and water tables of indigenous and non-indigenous communities around Canada and the world that result from over 8,000 spills a year, most of which go unreported. As Mr. George Henry pointed out, this is not just an environmental issue, it is a justice issue. It is an issue which affects our Five Marks of Mission, and it is an issue that invites us in peace and harmony to collaborate together for the sake of our children, future generations, and to creation itself.

Over the course of Monday and Tuesday, delegates of this year's synod engaged in very important initial conversations and follow-up discussions concerning the proposed amendment to the marriage canon. In finding ways to have these conversations, we were asked three questions: 1) How does it challenge/encourage you; 2) What sorts of clarifications do you have or need answered; and 3) What would be helpful questions to have at the deanery levels. From these questions, what followed were truly profound encounters with one another where everyone was invited to practice deep listening and non-judgement. Numerous delegates remarked how appreciative and positive were the conversations and the ways all had opportunities to be fully present to one another and attentive to the ways the Holy Spirit was working among us. Bishop Linda commented that to this day, we have not fully discerned the whole truth concerning this matter and that as we are called to live together and to come to the one same table together, we are also called to listen to what we have not heard in the other, in our disagreements, and in ourselves. Where we go from here is to take these conversations back to our parishes and councils and to engage in deeper dialogue to the end that we will have something to bring with us to General Synod in 2019.

This year's list of motions focused primarily (as they often do) on the reworking or rewording of existing canons. Of note was the entire reworking of Canon 12 affecting New Ministries, Partnerships, Realignment, and Administration, and the clarifications of Canon 9 concerning Clerical Appointments and Vacations, as well as motions addressing Group benefits, Parish Records, and Retiring Gratuity for clergy. Considering the conversations, points of debate and clarifications regarding the motions, it was very evident that our synod representatives took the time to read the reports and recommendations that were diligently put together.

In closing, as synod wrapped up this year, it was felt from many quarters that the Holy Spirit was truly alive and present with us ranging from the fundraising and discipleship of our youngest members who raised \$2700 at this year's synod towards an upcoming CLAY event and towards a Safe Water project, to the several other speakers of this year's synod such as Bridge Builders, the Anglican Church Women, and the Brotherhood of Anglican Churchmen who continue to advocate through prayer, work, and stewardship, spiritual development, education, and funding for much of the work of our diocese. As the Rt. Rev'd Linda Nicholls concluded in her message "The Way Home", we leave as a team, a team known as Team Huron which is committed towards strong discipleship and our continual work together and for one another for the sake of God's mission in our world. In this diocese, let it be known that we are committed to leading lives worthy of the callings to which we have been called to. Thanks be to God!

Respectfully submitted by
Jeff Kischak