

SYNOD CHARGE

Welcome to the 177th Synod of the Diocese of Huron! There is always a sense of excitement and energy in the air at the beginning of a synod as we gather to consider the life of our diocese, as friends reconnect to share stories of the past year, as we share plans and opportunities - and as we wait with great anticipation to see what the Youth will challenge us with this year! Just please don't drown Church House again!!

Let me begin with some reflections on the past year. I have now been in the diocese for just over two years. In that time I have shared in parish worship in 81 congregational visits in 67 parishes apart from parish events, deanery confirmations. I did say it would likely take me at least three years to be in every parish so I am hopeful that will happen in the next eighteen months. I have enjoyed getting to know the uniqueness and diversity of the different deaneries and areas of our diocese, especially through the Bishop's Friends dinners. Each area has its own flavor through its history and the unique silent auctions that have provided me with craft apple cider; a refinished organ bench; a specially designed paddle and several opportunities to cook Indian dinners for winning bidders!

Over the past year TEAM HURON has been hard at work! The new Stewardship Committee has offered workshops in several deaneries and been available for consultation to parishes. I have heard good news in response to their work. The Congregational Coaches continue to support selection committees, NCD and strategic planning. The Archdeacons have walked closely with many parishes through particular challenges of building renovations, congregational planning, and proposals for new ministry ideas. I meet regularly with the Archdeacons, individually and together, to ensure that all our parishes and clergy are supported as needed. Our staff work hard to ensure that you and your Wardens have the support they need for the daily operations of your church, safe church and personnel issues. We are a TEAM together.

The team of Archdeacons has changed in the past year with the appointment of the Ven Tim Dobbin (Brant/Norfolk) - and the Ven. Kim Van Allan (Huron/Perth) - and we have recycled two - the Ven. Janet Griffith-Clarke (Delaware/Oxford) and Bishop Terry Dance (Lambton/Kent). Thank you to the Ven. Janet Griffith-Clarke for her ministry in Brant/Norfolk/Oxford and for the Ven. Allan Livingstone (Huron/Perth) for their commitment as Archdeacons! I am deeply aware of the responsibilities the Archdeacons carry in addition to their ministries as parish priests and want to thank their parishes for sharing in the life of the whole diocese through the gift of time of their priest.

We rejoiced with the Rev. Jeff Kischak and the Rev. Anne Vevara-Divinski as they were ordained as deacons and then as priests. Anne is our first Priest for Specialized Ministry, working in partnership the Rev. Carrie Irwin. The opportunity to have an ordination to the priesthood for Jeff and Anne at St. George's, Owen Sound, in the area they serve, was deeply appreciated by the parishes of the Saugeens - and the joy in the full church was a delight. We welcome the Rev. Jenny Sharp who has returned to Huron from the East; and tonight we will honour retiring clergy;

Last October we shared in grief with the Lutheran Anglican Ministry of the Bruce Peninsula when their priest, the Rev. Chad Honneyman, was tragically killed in an accident. It was a gift to share in ministry in that time with Bishop Michael Pryse, of the ELCIC, as we walked with Chad's wife, Kim, and the whole parish through that tragedy. Most poignant was the immediate recognition within that parish of the need to pray for the young man who had caused the accident - knowing that his life too had been shattered. That is Christian witness - compassion for others in the midst of your own pain.

We continued to see some churches reach the point where sustaining the congregation in the present way was not possible. Several chose to disestablish - there are photos of these congregations as part of the video loop being shown in the lobby on the two monitors. We give thanks for the life and witness of these congregations over many years - and know that the seeds of faith planted in the lives of their parishioners live on in the wider church. We held celebrations of their ministry as they were deconsecrated over the past year.

Church of the Good Shepherd, Woodstock, amalgamated with Christ Church, Huntingford
 St. Stephen's, Courtright
 St. George's, Windsor
 St. Thomas, Owen Sound - amalgamated with St. George's Owen Sound
 Holy Trinity, London - amalgamated with St. Stephen's, London

Abide in the Word

Last year I encouraged everyone to engage in discipleship and grow in faith. Discipleship is a commitment - a commitment to a way of living that reflects our identity as followers of Jesus. When you want to learn a new way of living - healthier or fitter - you have to practice new habits - 15 minutes a day of walking or running; choosing healthier foods; shopping for food in new ways. Training our hearts in the ways of the gospel takes practice - one of the habits is spending time in God's Word - the Bible is our primary source for the Word. The Bible is a rich and sometimes complex source for knowing God and God's ways. Each of us needs to know its stories, history and ask how it touches and changes us. Many recently engaged in 'Thy Kingdom Come' or the Gospel of John study in Lent.

I want to say a particular word of thanks to Bishop Terry Dance for the deanery contextual bible studies he has been offering in Advent and Lent around the diocese. It is a sign of encouragement when 40-80 people turn out to study the scriptures!! I also want to thank Huron, Renison and Canterbury Colleges for the licentiate courses offered around the diocese that deepen faith and understanding. A particular shout out to The Saugeens Theology Series at St. George's, Blue Mountain for making courses available in the Saugeens!

Indigenous Ministry & Reconciliation

Thank you for the participation of so many in Blanket Exercises around the diocese and to Bridge Builders and others who have faithfully provided the leadership for them. Our continued education in the legacy of our relationship with Indigenous people is critical to our ongoing work of reconciliation. Participating in a blanket exercise is just a first step. I encourage parishes, deaneries and every Anglican to continue our education. Our journey in reconciliation is a long one.

- Visit one of our own indigenous parishes - to sit and listen and learn.
- Read a book ...There are many books written by indigenous authors that open our eyes. I recently read and recommend - *21 things you may not know about the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph - the policies of our government continue to stand in the way of fuller reconciliation and many of those policies we do not know. This book gives us a glimpse.
- Watch one or more of the videos of our national Anglican Sacred Circles - all of the videos are on the Anglican.ca website to know the longings and desires of Anglican Indigenous people across Canada. Some continue to work for a self-determining indigenous Anglican Church within the Anglican Church of Canada.
- Listen to an indigenous radio program such as CBC's UNRESERVED with Rosanna Deerchild to hear the richness and diversity of Indigenous life in Canada. Interviews with Indigenous writers, artists, musicians, Indigenous leaders, lawyers that inspire and challenge!

Huron Church Camp

Every summer I look forward to visiting Huron Church Camp! It is a great gift in our diocese - the Camp for youth and youth leaders. The Camp faces three immediate challenges: a need for new Washrooms; filling the camp with more campers; and endowing chaplain's ministry. If you or your parish or family have benefitted from Huron Church Camp - consider how you can help the camp continue to share that good news - Hold a fund raiser; sponsor a camper; have a parish event and invite Gerry and a camper to tell you the wonderful stories of Camp. They are the best advertisements imaginable.

Our Camp property is a gift to others as well. Camp Wendake - for people who are HIV positive and their families shares the camp in late August. Last summer I visited Camp Wendake - and was moved as I was repeatedly told how important this camp is to those who come. There is a waiting list and a lottery to choose those who will attend. It is the highlight of the year for many and a rare gift of solidarity for those for whom their illness can still be a stigma. Please pray for the Camp, its staff and leaders and all the campers.

The Camp property is a beautiful gift in our midst that is used extensively in the summer months but not the rest of the year. We need to explore how this gift might be used in other ways that will connect people with God through the wonders of God's creation. We need to dream of possibilities.....and seek partnerships that will allow us to build those dreams - but always keeping the core use of the Camp in the summer for youth and young adults. A small group has begun to wonder - dream and consider what might be possible.

FUTURE

Last night in my homily I spoke about my recent time in Assisi and being deeply struck by the call to St. Francis to 'rebuild my church' which he did - both the church at San Damiano and later realizing that God also meant rebuilding the life of God's people - the living stones of the Church. That is our call as Christians - to live as disciples (as apprentices) in the way of Jesus so that God's Church - the people of God living as the Creator intended - in love, forgiveness, compassion and justice - is built.

Thank you for the hard work leading into Vestry meetings on your Mission & Ministry Plans. It is helpful to step back and look at all aspects of the life of our parishes - to be encouraged by the breadth of activities, especially in local outreach. As I have read some of the Plans I see many faithfully living into the last three Marks of Mission. And I see the struggle we have to live the first two.

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

We need to focus on telling the Good News - expecting people to come and join the Good News and nurture them and ourselves in it. In 2018-2019 we are piloting a program in partnership with the Institute of Evangelism at Wycliffe College in missional coaching. We have invited a number of parishes to participate in the pilot, along with our congregational coaches. The program will assist parishes to think about key areas of parish life through the lens of those who are not currently part of the church. Too often we are so embedded in seeing the church as we always have that we cannot imagine how

foreign and strange we may be - or realize that we need to express ourselves in new ways. This pilot will help a parish team of clergy and laity to consider their life in new ways and reach out to tell our story in Christ. We hope this pilot will become available to more parishes next year!

At the end of 2017 we set aside a portion of the Huron Development Fund set aside as JUBILEE GRANTS - grants of up to \$5000 that can assist a parish to create Christ centered community with those they have not served before. This is another task towards Goals 1 & 2 of the 5 Marks of Mission. A small committee worked with me to establish the criteria, receive applications and hear their pitches in person. We were delighted to receive 14 applications - though the total grants requested were double what we had available. We look forward to hearing more from these fresh ideas for ministry as they are implemented. I am hoping that Diocesan Council will consider future grants as we are able. Watch the Huron Church News for stories about the grants!

Living the 5 Marks of Mission is the apprenticeship of being a disciple. I suspect a few may think 'Phew....that Mission & Ministry plan is done and can go on the shelf'Not so!! Working on the plan is just the start - the next step is to come back to it every year and ask 'How are we doing?' What worked well? What did not? - What do we need to stop doing? What are we missing? What is God calling us to now? This Mission & Ministry Plan must be revisited annually - by Parish Council, by the Wardens, by every parishioner - to celebrate what is helping you to be God's people and to set new goals for the coming year - and to ask what do we need to learn? What do we need to change? Watch for more information in the Fall!!

Wider Church

Later this morning we will continue our consideration of the Marriage Canon. Thank you to all who participated in deanery opportunities to share your perspectives on the proposed change that passed first reading in 2016. The Canon will return to General Synod in 2019 for a second vote. Our consideration will be forwarded to General Synod as part of the ongoing discernment. Please remember the whole church in your prayers as we listen for God's Spirit in the midst of diversity on this issue. I especially want to thank the Ven. Greg Jenkins, Marilyn Malton and the Rev. Dr. Stephen McClatchie for their assistance in our conversations.

It was a great privilege to visit our Companion Diocese - the Diocese of Amazonia with the Dean and his wife for the consecration of their new bishop, the first woman bishop in Brazil, Bishop Marinez Bassotto. Although the visit was short, I was struck by how much our partnership with them is appreciated. Amazonia is a fledgling mission diocese seeking to become sustainable. Our support and prayers are critical for them. We are planning a visit of Bishop Marinez and the Dean, Claudio di Miranda and diocesan assistant, Joseane da Silva in September this year - September 10-28th. The Companion Diocese Committee will say more later about plans. I trust that as many as possible will share in meeting them, assuring them of our prayers and listening to the challenges of Anglican life in a new diocese. Other plans for building our relationship will be shared by the Companion Committee.

Please remember our wider Church here in Canada too in the coming year as there are transitions ahead. Our Metropolitan, Archbishop Colin Johnson will be retiring at the end of December. At our Provincial Synod in October we will elect a new Metropolitan for the Province. The new Metropolitan also automatically becomes the Bishop of Moosonee as that diocese now is a mission of the Province.

Theme

As we move into our Synod discernment and consider our life let the key words and phrases of our theme bubble up and through all that we do - Discipleship Abide in the Word..... Here I am send me.....Rebuild my Church!

We have been sent by our baptismal promises - sent to LIVE as disciples of God by following Jesus Christ. We are asked: Will you pray - will you study - will you be at eucharist - will you repent & return - will you proclaim - will you love - will you seek justice and peace - will you care for God's creation? We have said - I will with God's help! When we are discouraged at the state of the church - lack of young people; low attendance; low resources; we look for what is wrong - and ask how to fix it. We hope it is an easy fix - like discovering a problem with a motor and deciding it just needs some oil or a tune up. Sometimes it needs to be stripped down - cleaning all the parts - making sure each works as it is intended to - is focused on its purpose.

Sometimes we too need to step back and ask - if it is not working what is the one and only part I can change? That part is ME!... We can only start with ourselves and invite others to do the same. Does everything we(I) do reflect what we have been called to? The people who are the most attractive as Christians are those who live what they believe - Nurture their spiritual life regularly - Think about their life and actions in relations to Jesus and the gospel - Love neighbor as self.

When people outside the church - including our children/grandchildren - see us what do they see? We live in a world of story-telling where others want to know what is YOUR story? Why does your way of living make a difference? They want to listen and assess its truthfulness based on your experience and whether your words and actions match the values you proclaim. It is not about telling someone else-s story - even just telling Jesus' story. It is about telling the story of how your life is changed, transformed by joining Jesus' story.

What do we want to be known for? If we were to stop someone on the street - and ask them what they think of the Diocese of Huron or of your parish what would they say? What do we want them to say or hope they will say?

We are apprentices in the work of rebuilding God's Church -in learning to be disciples every day. Everything we do is to be rooted in God and our starting place is 'abiding in the Word' - the written word of scripture and living word of Jesus Christ.

For St. Francis rebuilding the church started with him - he literally stripped down - leaving all his wealth and even his clothes behind - and then spent time studying God's word, praying and starting to rebuild the church himself. In a world without the internet, the phone, the TV or radio, news of his actions and his commitment spread rapidly and others joined him, inspired by his example and teaching. What would happen if each of us in this room asked ourselves - What is Jesus calling me to do? To change? To Be? To live the Gospel. Imagine the Diocese of Huron with passionate, energetic disciples living every one of the Marks of Mission in their daily lives and in their parishes.

Rebuild your Church, O Lord - and let it begin with me!