

Minutes of the 146th SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA
Saturday November 7, 2020 via Zoom videoconference
“Seeing with the Eyes of our Hearts” ~ Ephesians 1:15-19

Call to Order & Territorial Acknowledgement

The Right Reverend Susan Bell called synod to order at 9:00 am.

Filmed on the banks of the Grand River, on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee of the Six Nations, the Mississauga of the Credit, and the Neutrals, the Reverend Cheryl Barker acknowledged that the land on which the diocese is situated is treaty land, and home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people. The Venerable Val Kerr offered a brief teaching about reconciliation, which emphasized the importance of listening, respect, understanding and relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Organizing Synod

Welcome to New Members of Synod & Privileges of the House

The Right Reverend Susan Bell welcomed new members of synod and guests, inviting them to wave and be recognized. The Bishop welcomed and extended privileges of the house to the Venerable Dr. Timothy Dobbin who has been appointed to serve as Rector of Christ’s Church Cathedral and Dean of Niagara beginning January 1, 2021.

Credentials Committee Report

Chancellor Greg Tweney advised synod that as of 8:55 am 74 members of the order of the clergy, representing 84%, and 130 members of the order of the laity, representing 79%, were present and that 77 parishes were represented, or 81%. Quorum was achieved.

MOTION 1: Credentials Committee Report

Mr. Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

‘THAT the report of the credentials committee be accepted.’

CARRIED

Notices of Motion

The Chancellor spoke about the rules of order and advised members that since the convening circular had been published no additional motions had been received. Mr. Greg Tweney indicated that any motions for consideration at this synod would need to be presented in writing to Ms. Mary Anne Grant no later than 10:20 am. Any additional requests received would be noted under other business.

Appointments to Diocesan Court

The Bishop informed members of synod that she was appointing the following people to the diocesan court: The Reverend Canon Stuart Pike, The Venerable Peter Scott, The Reverend Sheila VanZandwyk, Mr. Neil Bell, Ms. Ann Cunningham, and Ms. Mary Donkin.

Appointment of Honorary Canons

The Right Reverend Susan Bell announced that the Reverend Mike Deed, the Reverend Leslie Gerlofs and the Reverend Paul Walker had been appointed as honorary canons of Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton.

Gathering Prayers with the Bishop's Charge to Synod

The synod's opening worship included a reading from the Letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1 verses 15-19. This passage inspired the synod's theme "Seeing with the Eyes of our Hearts" for this synod.

The Right Reverend Susan Bell delivered her charge to members of synod from the Cathedral.

"The first thing I want to say to you today – or rather the first thing I think Jesus wants me to say to you today is: it's going to be alright." These words of reassurance were followed by an acknowledgement that things will be different going forward. "This time will change us as a Church in good ways and less good ways," observed the Bishop. "But this is God's Church and I know that God is leading us through COVID-19 to be something new and something shrunken and something beautifully different and yet at its core, the same. "

In addition, the Bishop lauded the faithfulness of Anglicans in Niagara through this time of pandemic, declaring that the old adage that the Church not being the building has been demonstrably true.

Bishop Bell also spoke about the generosity of those who have supported the diocesan Pandemic Response Fund and the wonderful ministry it has supported, the gift of being organized as a diocese, and the importance of being loving towards one another through this unprecedented time.

Highlighting the diocesan Mission Action Plan, the Bishop pointed toward the work that continued during the pandemic. She noted that great strides have been made on the development of a school for missional leadership, that the Climate Justice Niagara committee has been retooled to respond to the climate crisis, and that an anti-racism working group has been formed. The Bishop also announced that the Reverend Ian Mobsby, diocese of Southwark, would become canon theologian for mission.

The Bishop concluded her address to synod with words of gratitude, especially to members of synod. "My greatest thanks is to all of you: for your faithfulness to God, for your commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for your devotion to your parish families, for your love of our diocesan family and the good work we do together as the Body of Christ, and for your dedication in being the face and hands of Jesus in your communities."

Consent Agenda

The following items were listed on the consent agenda for the synod:

Election of Synod Secretaries

'that Ms. Linda Lamarche be elected as the honorary lay secretary of synod and the Reverend Pam Guyatt be elected as the honorary clerical secretary of synod for the 146th synod of the diocese.'

Minutes of the 145th Synod

'that the minutes of the 145th synod of the diocese, as found on pages 8-18 of the convening circular, be approved.'

Adoption of the Agenda

'that the agenda as presented by the synod agenda committee be adopted.'

Reception of All Reports

' that all reports found in the convening circular be received.'

Trinity College Corporation

'that the representatives from the Diocese of Niagara to the Corporation of Trinity College be: the Reverend Fran Wallace and the Reverend Sue-Ann Ward (clergy) and Sister Heather Broadwell (lay); for a term of two years.'

Affirmation of the Actions of Synod Council

'that the synod council report, having been fully considered, be now finally approved, and that all the decisions, agreements and documents entered into and signed on synod's behalf since its last report, be hereby ratified and confirmed.'

MOTION# 2: Approval of the Consent Agenda

Ms. Amy Collard / The Venerable David Anderson

'THAT the items listed on the consent agenda be approved as circulated.'

CARRIED

Missional Moment #1 – Pandemic Response Fund

A five-minute video highlighted the ministry of the diocesan Pandemic Respond Fund and how during the COVID-19 pandemic the people of our diocese have been supporting each other and our neighbours in a variety of ways. The following parishes and ministries received support from the Pandemic Support Fund; Christ's Church Cathedral Hamilton, Grace Church Waterdown, Holy Trinity Niagara Falls, Holy Trinity Welland, St. Alban's Acton, St. Barnabas St. Catharines, the Migrant Farm Workers Project, The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), St. Christopher's Burlington, St. James Fergus, St. John's Thorold, St. Luke's Burlington, St. Luke's Palermo, St. Paul's Caledonia, and The Church of the Apostles Guelph.

BREAK

Report on the Diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP)

The Venerable Bill Mous stated that the plan to have breakout groups was not possible, due to technical limitations given the size of the virtual meeting.

Canon Christyn Perkons spoke to the MAP vision of being 'Called to Life – Compelled to Love' and how, based on feedback to Synod 2019, the mission statement was amended, and now included a trinitarian formulation as follows:

Amended: *Ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus
and renewed by the Holy Spirit,
we partner with God to deepen faith,
share stories, and care for God's world.*

Canon Perkons reported that synod council approved the final draft of the three- to five-year diocesan Mission Action Plan, which is being aligned to reflect the pandemic. For each of the three objectives, examples were given of how the diocesan MAP was being lived out.

Objective #1: Create and Implement Opportunities to Ignite and Strengthen Faith

- Offering an online Sunday morning diocesan worship service
- Continuing of Revive under the guidance of the Reverend Canon Leslie Gerlofs

- Creating of digital resources to support online services and faith formation opportunities
- Hiring a diocesan missionary, The Reverend Jeff Potter
- Hosting online junior & senior youth group & the Anglican Family Hub
- Renewing the diocesan relationship with Cursillo
- Authorizing a new rite – Affirming the Newly Named

Objective #2: Reimagine Diocesan Culture and Adapt Our Structures to Enable Ministry

- Creating an Anti-Racism Working Group
- Developing the Niagara School for Missional Leadership
- Establishing the Transformational Budget Working Group
- Making governance changes in policies, guidelines, and canons
- Retooling the diocesan website & launching a new visual identity

Objective #3 Prioritize Social Justice Action with an Emphasis on Environmental Justice

- Re-mandating the Greening Niagara committee to become Climate Justice Niagara
- Offering programs such as Creation Care That Counts and Niagara in Action
- Organizing Fiercely Loved, first diocesan pride service; adapted for online worship
- Establishing the Pandemic Response Fund
- Pivoting the Greater St. Catharines Social Justice Group to a volunteer model
- Initiating a Human Trafficking working group

Canon Perkons noted that there a variety of initiatives being planned for the coming year as the diocesan Mission Action Plan continues to be lived out; the following were highlighted:

- An easy-to-use new resource for parishes to develop their own mission action plan that aligns with the diocesan MAP in a way that fits local contexts
- New missional communities planted and church plants within established churches
- More differentiated curacies
- A Zoom workshop and conference with Sarah Bessey
- Incubator groups to discuss topics of interest
- Mapping the Ground We Stand On (Truth & Reconciliation initiative) regional events
- Invite Welcome Connect; a transformational ministry focusing on gospel-driven ministry around radical hospitality and sharing our gospel stories

The presentation concluded with members of synod reciting the diocesan Mission Action Plan prayer.

Audit Matters

Reception of the Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements

MOTION #3: 2019 Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements

Mr. Andrew Clinkard / Mr. Jim Higginson

'THAT the Auditor's Report, as found on pages 40-45 of the convening circular be received and the 2019 audit consolidated financial statements, as found on pages 46-64 of the convening circular, be received.'

CARRIED

The Bishop thanked Canon Jody Beck for overseeing this extraordinary remote audit process and for her good and sound stewardship of our finances, capably supported by the diocesan staff and our Financial Advisory Committee and its subcommittees.

Appointment of Auditors for 2021

MOTION #4: Appointment of Auditors

Ms. Brenda Lane / Canon Jody Beck

‘THAT KPMG be appointed as auditors for the fiscal year 2020.’

CARRIED

Canon Changes

Chancellor Greg Tweney spoke to the process for making changes to the canons and explained that there must be 2/3 majority in each order for such a motion to be carried. The Venerable Bill Mous explained that there are 3 proposed canonical changes, including one entirely new canon.

New: The Cathedral of the Diocese of Niagara

The Venerable Bill Mous described the goal of the canon as being four-fold: 1) to define the special nature of the cathedral congregation’s status and ministry context, 2) to uphold and protect the rights, responsibilities, and duties assigned to a duly established parish by Canon 4.1, 3) to provide flexibility for the relationship between the cathedral congregation and diocese to evolve as necessary, and 4) to enshrine the basic tenets of the Cathedral Place Property Management Committee. Noting that the Cathedral corporation had been consulted as part of the development of the canon and was supportive of it, Archdeacon Mous proceeded to outline the provisions of the new canon.

MOTION #5: New Canon: The Cathedral of the Diocese of Niagara

The Venerable Bill Mous / Mr. Rob Jones

‘THAT this synod approve the addition of a new canon, to read as follows:

Canon 2.10 The Cathedral of the Diocese of Niagara

1. The Bishop of Niagara’s cathedra shall be located at 252 James Street North in Hamilton, hereafter referred to as Cathedral Place, in the worship space of Christ’s Church Cathedral.
2. The Cathedral congregation shall have all rights, responsibilities, and duties assigned to a duly established parish by Canon 4.1, with the exception of those fiduciary responsibilities related to the care and trusteeship of the buildings and property on which the Cathedral is situated, including its fixtures, fittings, and fabric, which shall be the responsibility of the diocese, save and except the maintenance, repair or improvement of the organ which shall remain the responsibility of the Cathedral congregation.
- 3 a) The Cathedral congregation shall be expected to make annual contributions to the diocese for:
 - i. the upkeep of the Cathedral Place property, drawing on designated funds held for the maintenance, repair or improvement of fixtures, fittings, or

- fabric located at Cathedral Place and any additional funds as may be necessary, and
- ii. the mission and ministry of the diocese.
- b) The base amounts for these contributions shall be determined by a prescribed formula established by regulations approved by the synod council, in consultation with the corporation of the Cathedral.
4. a) There shall be a Cathedral Place Property Management Committee to oversee the care, maintenance, and management of the Cathedral Place property and buildings and to advise the officers of the synod and the synod council about related policy matters.
- b) The specific terms of reference for the Committee shall be established by the synod council.
- c) The membership of the Committee shall consist of:
- i. the Executive Officer;
 - ii. the Rector of Christ's Church Cathedral;
 - iii. two members elected by the Cathedral vestry for a two-year term;
 - iv. two members elected by the synod council of the diocese for a two-year term; and
 - v. a chair who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Bishop of Niagara.
- d) An alternate member may be elected by both the vestry and synod council to attend and vote at committee meetings should the respective elected representatives be compelled to be absent.'

The Very Reverend Peter Wall and Mr. Rob Jones spoke in favour of this motion.

**CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF CLERGY
CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF LAITY**

Amendment: Canon 1.9 (9) – Synod Council

Chancellor Greg Tweney spoke to this motion, noting it arises from our experience during the pandemic whereby the governing body may need to meet sooner than the usual notice period.

MOTION #5: Amendment: Canon 1.9 (9) – Synod Council

Mr. Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

'THAT section 9 of Canon 1.9 be amended to read as follows:

The Synod Council shall meet at least six (6) times between each annual session of the Diocesan Synod on such dates and at such places or by such means as the bishop shall determine, provided fourteen (14) days notice of any meeting being given. The Secretary of Synod may, upon the written requisition of at least ten (10) members of the Synod Council call a meeting of Synod Council provided fourteen (14) days notice of any meeting being given. In extraordinary circumstances, the Bishop may call a meeting of Synod Council sooner than the aforementioned fourteen (14) day notice period.'

**CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF CLERGY
CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF LAITY**

Amendment: Canon 4.1 – Vestries and Churchwardens

Chancellor Greg Tweney spoke to this motion, which arises from the diocesan experience of the pandemic, noting the proposed canon adds flexibility to our governance structures with regards to the possibilities for conducting virtual vestry meetings not currently contemplated by the canons.

MOTION: Amendment: Canon 4.1 – Vestries and Churchwardens

Mr. Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

‘THAT the following provision be added to Canon 4.1, as section 18:

Notwithstanding the provisions of this canon, the Bishop and Synod Council may enact regulations relating to the conduct of vestry meetings as may be necessary from time to time.’

**CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF CLERGY
CARRIED IN THE ORDER OF LAITY**

Missional Moment #2 – Migrant Farmworkers Ministry

The Reverend Antonio Illias, diocesan missionary, was featured in a video that showed how during the COVID-19 pandemic the Migrant Farmworkers project has moved from the church to the field. With the eyes of their hearts, each week teams of volunteers are delivering food and offering spiritual care directly to workers on farms. Food and other donations are being collected by the churches of St. Alban’s, Beamsville, St. John’s, Jordan and Christ Church, McNab.

BREAK

Presentation of the 2021 Diocesan Budget

Mr. Gerry Anthony, chair of the Transformational Working Budget Group, spoke about the proposed budget for 2021, acknowledging that “this is a difficult and extraordinary time” given the pandemic’s effects. The proposed budget represents a 3.6 million dollar investment in ministry. While the budget forecasts a deficit of \$473,000, it was noted that funds are in place to cover the deficit through the standard draw on investments and the sale of property in 2020.

Mr. Anthony noted the budget seeks to “balance fiscal responsibility with the need to carry on the essential work of the Church; to trim discretionary expenses and support parishes; and to live into our new vision for ministry while recognizing the evolving missional landscape.”

The Venerable Bill Mous outlined several initiatives included in the budget to support parishes, including the provision of \$250,000 to support parishes who may not be able to meet their usual DM&M contributions, in spite of their best efforts to do so; \$30,000 for a parish technology grant program; and the elimination of interest on receivables to support parish cash flow needs.

Canon Jody Beck gave an overview of the significant changes to the 2021 budget from previous years. She noted that employment expenses will decline and that there will not be a cost of living increase included in the budget. Expenses have been reduced in many areas, given travel and in-person programs are expected to be significantly limited in 2021. A targeted stewardship campaign is also planned, as there are generous donors who want to help the diocese through this extraordinary time.

MOTION #8: 2020 Diocesan Budget

Canon Jody Beck / Mr. Gerry Anthony

'THAT this synod approve the 2021 diocesan budget.'

CARRIED**Results of the Election of Delegates to Provincial Synod**

The Bishop indicated that the pre-synod electronic voting process had resulted in a tie for the fourth position of our clerical delegate. The Chancellor indicated that clergy members of synod would be asked to participate in a run-off vote conducted using the Zoom polling feature.

After the run-off vote was conducted, the Secretary of Synod announced the election results. In the order of clergy: The Venerable Dr. David Anderson, The Venerable Valerie Kerr, The Reverend Ann Turner, and The Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell were elected. In the order of laity, Mr. Andrew Clinkard, Ms. Janice Whiteley, Ms. Jodey Porter and Ms. Donna Ellis were elected.

The Reverend Rob Towler and the Reverend Dan Bennett will serve as alternates for the clergy while Mr. Neil Bell and Mr. Rob Pawson will serve as alternates for the laity.

The Bishop expressed gratitude to all who let their name stand and congratulated those elected.

Election of Regional Representatives to Synod Council

The Bishop invited the Secretary of Synod to display the slate of nominees selected or acclaimed by their respective regions for election by synod as representatives to synod council.

The slate of nominees included: Mr. Gary Pollard (Brock), Mr. Byran Elliston (Greater Wellington), Mr. David Eccles (Hamilton-Haldimand), and Mr. Byron Nicholson (Lincoln). Nominees to serve as alternates were: Ms. Siobhan Bennett (Brock), Mr. Ian Pratt (Hamilton-Haldimand), Ms. Cathy Lynn Hanson (Lincoln), and Mr. Rob Pawson (Trafalgar).

MOTION #9: Synod Council Election

Ms. Wendy Newman / The Reverend Will Alakas

'THAT this synod elect the regional members of synod council for the 2021/2022 term and alternate regional members for the 2021 term.'

CARRIED**Presentation on the Revision of the Diocesan Safe Church Policy**

The Venerable Bill Mous gave an update to synod about the work that is underway to overhaul existing policies with a more modern and robust Safe Church Policy. The revision will broaden diocesan policies to include conflict, harassment, and discrimination, with a view towards incorporating our beliefs and values as Anglicans as expressed in the new Anglican Communion Charter for the Safety of People, as well as current best practices and legislative requirements. The revised policy is expected to be brought forward for approval by synod council sometime next year.

Missional Moment #3 – Climate Justice Niagara

A video featuring the evolution of the Greening Niagara committee to the newly mandated Climate Justice Niagara (CJN) committee was shown. During the video, a new logo was shared and an update to

the motion passed at the previous synod to ban single use plastics by 2022 was provided. The goal of Climate Justice Niagara is to equip leaders and people of the diocese to be strong and advocate locally and globally for change through prayer, education, action and advocacy.

Other Business

The Venerable Bill Mous, secretary of synod, offered thanks to all involved in organizing this first-time virtual synod including members of the worship team, the technical team, and members of the agenda committee. He added that delegates will receive an electronic evaluation survey to complete.

Concluding Synod

The Bishop's Assent of the Actions of Synod

The Right Reverend Susan Bell gave her assent to all the acts and resolutions during synod, reminding members of synod that "God is good." The Bishop thanked members of synod and recognized the diocesan staff and the organizing committee on our first virtual synod. The Bishop gave a special thank you to Chancellor Greg Tweney, The Venerable Bill Mous, and Canon Jody Beck.

Closing Prayers & Blessing

The synod concluded with closing prayers. Bishop Susan Bell offered a blessing which included the commission to live the diocesan vision of being called to life and compelled to love.

Adjournment

The 146th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara adjourned at 12:35 p.m.