

MINUTES OF THE 147TH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Saturday October 30, 2021, via Zoom videoconference

“Facing Forward: Called to Life, Compelled to Love” Philippians 4:4-9

Call to Order & Territorial Acknowledgement

The Right Reverend Susan Bell called the synod to order at 9:04am.

Canon Susan Wilson delivered the Territorial Acknowledgement and Janice Whiteley offered a reflection on reconciliation from the Quiet Garden of St. Matthews on-the-Plains, Burlington.

Bishop Susan Bell reminded members of synod that Treaty Recognition Week begins November 3.

Organizing Synod

The bishop welcomed new members of synod and gave a brief overview of the rules of order. A practice vote was conducted to orient members to the Zoom polling tool. Privileges of the house were extended to Canon Mike Deed, diocesan liturgical officer, and Nirmal Mendis, a member of the Anti-Racism Working Group.

Credentials Committee Report

Chancellor Greg Tweney advised Synod that as of 8:55am 62 members of the order of the clergy, representing 73%, and 122 of the order of the laity, representing 75%, were present and that 70 out of 83 parishes were represented, or 84%. Quorum was achieved.

Motion 1: Credential Committee Report

Mr. Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT the report of the credentials committee be accepted.

CARRIED

Notices of Motion

The chancellor advised members that since the convening circular had been published no additional motions had been received. He indicated that any motions for consideration at this Synod would need to be presented in writing to Ms. Mary Anne Grant no later than 10:20am.

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 Van Zandwyk, Mr. Neil Bell, Ms. Ann Cunningham, Ms. Mary Donkin.

Gathering Prayers with Bishop's Charge to Synod

The synod's opening worship included a reading from Isaiah 41:10 with the message that resting in God's protection, we cannot fear if we are joyful. You cannot be both. Quoting Philippians 4, the bishop reminded members that we can banish fear with hope and love. We will *Face Forward: Called to Life; Compelled to Love*. Bishop Susan listed many reasons for our diocese to rejoice despite living another year with the pandemic.

Bishop Susan Bell noted that presently the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is ebbing as more and more people are vaccinated, including all clergy. Due to adherence to protocols, our diocese can *face forward*. As of November 1, All Saints Day, congregational singing is being reintroduced, masked, and distanced. As it is safer to worship in-person and to resume episcopal visits, the Bishop

announced that the online diocesan Sunday Prayer Service will be drawing to a conclusion. The bishop thanked all those who helped in its production.

The Bishop's Company continued during the pandemic with an online gathering featuring renowned broadcaster Steve Pakin of TVO in May and an upcoming evening with The Most Reverend Steven Cottrell, Archbishop of York and Primate of England, who will discuss politics and world issues.

Four new deacons, Rob Duncan, Matt Gillard, Rob Jones, and Randy Williams, and one priest, Michael Coren, have been recently ordained. And many more are poised to be ordained! Two church planters, Missioners Susie Kim and Rob Miller, have also begun their ministries.

During her personal visits to deliver medallions to the recipients of the Order of Niagara this fall, the bishop was struck by the many examples of Christian vocation and contributions these candidates exhibit in so many ways.

There is joy in the launch of the Niagara School of Missional Leadership where six courses have been offered this year and a full complement of courses is planned for the new year. The bishop thanked Chair Michael Smith and the generous supporters that made the launch possible.

The bishop rejoiced that Canterbury Hills was able to offer a day camp this year and thanked and bid farewell to Director Emily Lloyd. Plans are in the works next year for a future faith based overnight camp under the leadership of a new director.

During her charge, Bishop Susan Bell announced, in concert with Dean Tim Dobbin, that the Reverend Bahman Kalantari, the Reverend Sue Ann Ward, and Chancellor Greg Tweney have been named honorary canons of Christ's Church Cathedral.

The bishop acknowledged the toll on mental health that the pandemic has taken, many staff suffer an existential weariness and help is needed. She has worked with Canon Terry DeForest to extend clergy support and to provide access to more counselling.

There will be budgeted funds for parishes for differentiated curacies. Ordinands from many backgrounds with varied gifts of leadership can learn skills appropriate to the context of their placement serving rich, poor, mature, young, rural, street involved or children and families.

Ministries of prayer and faith, such as Alpha and Revive, continue. In reflecting on the pandemic, Bishop Bell also referred to Archbishop Rowan Williams' book "Candles in the Dark: Faith, Hope and Love in a Time of Pandemic."

To be Christian is to be in politics, noted the bishop, it is our duty to engage and to challenge. Our Climate Justice Niagara ministry has an important role as we are called to be stewards of the earth. Our youth are suffering existential angst facing the climate crisis which will have a direct impact on our children and their children. We must make a noise and encourage our young people to join in political action. It is the most important moral issue of our time.

The bishop also said that the Anti-Racism Working Group is doing Gospel work. Their efforts require bravery and fosters reconciliation as we face forward with respect and in following treaties.

Bishop Bell called the work of Canon Christyn Perkons on the diocese's Mission Action Plan a *Magnum opus* and referred synod members to the summary of MAP in their report in the convening circular. In Advent, the focus forward will shift to parishes creating their own Mission Action Plans in a way that will bring life to parish ministry in the local context. The bishop added that resourcing of these plans will be aided by the work of Gillian Doucet Campbell.

The Bishop offered thanks to members of synod, saying "You are the church. You are the Diocese" giving support through time, treasure, and talent. She thanked the crucial work of licensed lay workers, clergy, and retired clergy, especially helping in interim ministries. In particular, she recognized Canon Alison D'Atri, commending her "true and deep commitment" to the diocese. As well, she lauded Archdeacon Bill Mous, who brings many gifts in his service and who helped the diocese avoid outbreaks during pandemic due his clear weekly communications of protocols and information.

Bishop Bell thanked Dean Tim Dobbin, the new Dean of Christ's Church Cathedral and her new ministry partner, as well as diocesan staff in many areas for their work ethic and their service to the gospel. The bishop also noted that retiring treasurer, Canon Jody Beck, started in a global financial crisis and ends at the end of a pandemic. In her ten years in this role, Jody was open to all, provided excellent support, helped clergy and wardens orient to policy and provided excellent governance of the diocese and other boards. Finally, Synod Council was recognized for their enormous agenda and work this year as well.

In summary, the bishop said that despite the tragedy of the pandemic, we have found joy in adversity, strength in weakness. We have been blessed and will "carry on being the face and hands of Christ as we face forward in faith and hope and love."

Consent Agenda

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

Election of Synod Secretaries

that Ms. Sue Thibodeau 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 147th synod of the diocese.

Minutes of the 146th Synod

that the minutes of the 146th synod of the diocese, as found on pages 8-16 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, including the audited financial statements and auditor's report, be received.

Trinity College Corporation

that the representatives from the Diocese of Niagara to the Corporation of Trinity College be: the Reverend Garfield Wu (clergy), Ms. Mary Churchill and Ms. Mary Donkin (lay); for a term of two years.

Synod Council Report

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

The Reverend Garfield Wu / Ms. Amy Collard

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

Missional Moment #1 Niagara School of Missional Leadership

A five-minute video featured teacher-practitioners and learner-practitioners who gave testimonials to the value of the courses offered in this first year of the Niagara School for Missional. Courses foster a paradigm shift to help participants, both lay and ordained, Anglican and non-Anglican, be "missional" through providing tools for their toolbox in areas such as preaching and helping them be more flexible and nimbler in their ministries. Winter courses are almost ready, and inquiries can be made at nsml.ca.

BREAK

Diocesan Safe Church Policy Presentation

Archdeacon Bill Mous and Canon Greg Tweney reported that the Diocese of Niagara's Safe Church Policy came into effect on October 1, as approved by Synod Council. The new policy represents a more modern, more robust, and more expansive policy. It now incorporates all forms of conflict, discrimination, and harassment with informal and formal resolution processes. The Safe Church Policy complies with all Ontario legislation and complements the Anglican Safe Church Charter for the Safety of People. It will be reviewed annually for best practices. Clergy and wardens will receive orientation to the policy which can be found on the diocesan website.

Motion #3: Diocesan Safe Church Policy

Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT this synod fully endorse the new diocesan Safe Church Policy, as approved by Synod Council on June 22, 2021.

CARRIED

Canon Changes

Motion #4 Amendment to Canon 1.4 - Election to General & Provincial Synods

Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT section 5(2) of Canon 1.4, as follows, be deleted:

'(2) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall be deemed to prohibit nominations from the floor of the Diocesan Synod, provided that any such nomination is moved and seconded and the nominee assents to being nominated.'

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

Motion #5: Amendment to Canon 2.1 (6) - Election of Bishops

Canon Greg Tweney / The Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell

THAT Canon 2.1 (6) be amended to read as follows:

6. (a) *Those entitled to vote at the election of a Bishop shall be those members of Synod duly elected or appointed according to the provisions of Canon 1.1.*
- (b) *Retired clergy and retired licensed lay workers of the diocese, and clergy from other dioceses presently serving in the diocese and holding a Bishop's permission, may attend the Electoral Synod but are not permitted to vote in an episcopal election.'*

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

Motion #6: Amendment to Canon 4.1 (16)- Vestries and Churchwardens

The Venerable Bill Mous / Canon Greg Tweney

THAT Canon 4.1 (16) be amended to read as follows:

It shall also be the duty of the Churchwardens to make financial provision for the cost of insurance coverage, as provided through the diocesan insurance policy and approved by Synod Council.

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

The Bishop thanked members of synod for passing these changes to our canons to better reflect current practices and provide a bit more nimbleness to our governance.

Anti-Racism Working Group Presentation

This working group has been mandated by Bishop Susan Bell to build a “made in Niagara” response that would open the eyes of our hearts to the racism in our parishes and in our institution - and to the yearning of God for a turning of our diocesan culture to one of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Reverend Naomi Kabugi, chair of the Anti-Racism Working Group, acknowledged the members of the group and reviewed the process the group underwent in their first year of trying to discern a framework, where they practised careful listening and being open to a movement of the spirit. She noted that an anti-racism stance is embedded in the sacrament of baptism - to renounce all forces of evil powers that corrupt and destroy the creatures of God. The sacrament of baptism binds us all. Every year at Easter, renewing our vows can energize us, and can be an act of breaking barriers and establishing new relationships. Like fish drinking water in which we live, racism is hidden in all of us. Thus, listening is important. We need to be allies, to examine preconceived notions, and to embrace radical welcoming and inclusion.

Canon Christyn Perkons facilitated a time of discussion and engagement arising from the promises made in baptism and the question: How do these faith commitments invite you to engage in anti-racism work? Members of synod shared responses in the chat box and verbally.

The presentation concluded with the chair reporting that action plans include: to have a monthly column in The Niagara Anglican; to develop training programs for individuals and parishes; to establish fair human resource policies for clergy, parishes, and volunteers; to train facilitators; and to “move forward with care not to wound.”

Missional Moment #2- Mission in Acts

Mission in Acts welcomes Chinese newcomers and immigrants, building belonging and inclusion by facilitating various programs and ministries. The missional work of St. Cuthbert’s and St. Luke’s in Oakville was highlighted where the diocesan mission statement Called to Life and Compelled to Love is lived out in serving seniors, children and youth and newcomers to Canada and to the Anglican Church. The Reverend Garfield Wu shared ways in which the Chinese creative music program and coffee time were adapted and continued during the pandemic.

BREAK

Climate Justice Niagara-Parish Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plans

Ms. Sue Carson, chair of Climate Justice Niagara, started the presentation with a reminder that in the midst of ongoing climate crises, we are experiencing the biggest health threat facing humanity. As God’s stewards, the committee challenges us to act with the words:

If not us- then who? If not now- then when?

In 2019 a climate emergency was declared by synod. The diocese has since responded with prayer, education, action, and advocacy. Climate Justice Niagara’s goal is to assist and resource every parish to complete a walk-through Energy Audit of their buildings by the end of 2022, that wardens and clergy create a five-year plan to reach a green gas reduction target of at least 10% by 2024, and that parishes publicize their efforts to the community at large demonstrating our commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

Motion #7: Parish Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plans

Ms. Sue Carson / Ms. Anne Young

Whereas the global climate emergency has been identified by Bishop Susan Bell, at previous Diocese of Niagara Synods, and the Anglican Church of Canada, as the most pressing moral issue of our time;

And whereas the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released yet another dire warning for the planet this year;

And whereas the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope, and the Ecumenical Patriarch urged world leaders “to listen to the cry of the Earth” and address climate change;

And whereas our Baptismal Covenant and our Fifth Mark of Mission call us to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth;

And whereas it is critical for the Diocese of Niagara to raise the level of the environmental awareness and prompt intentional remedial action;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Synod mandate Climate Justice Niagara to assist and resource parishes to complete a walk-through Energy Audit of their church buildings by the end of 2022;

AND THAT wardens and clergy use the audit to create a five-year plan to reach a greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least ten percent (10%) by 2024;

AND THAT all parishes be encouraged to publicize their efforts as Christian witness to the community at large and means of demonstrating our deep and abiding commitment to addressing the climate crisis.

CARRIED

Audit Matters

Canon Jody Beck spoke briefly about the 2020 auditor’s report and audited consolidated financial statements, which was received at the outset of the Synod as part of the convening circular.

Motion #8 Appointment of Auditors

Mr. Andrew Clinkard / The Reverend Canon Leslie Gerlofs

THAT KPMG be appointed as auditors for the fiscal year 2021.

CARRIED

2022 Diocesan Budget Presentation

Archdeacon Peter Scott, chair of the Missional Budget Planning Committee, reminded synod that this is a Missional Budget based on two principles: continued support of parishes during the pandemic and the implementation of the Mission Action Plan. Drawing on the synod’s theme, Archdeacon Scott noted that we need to rejoice always, in good times and bad. We can rejoice at the generosity of parishioners; that technology grants totalling \$60,000 went to 36 parishes to create or sustain online worship and many parishes now permanently offer hybrid worship; and that the diocese received and shared \$3.3 million in CEWS subsidies in 2020.

In speaking about the 2022 budget, Archdeacon Scott noted the following:

- funds will be available for new initiatives: the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, new differentiated curacies, added help for pastors in the Employee and Family Assistance Plan, Niagara Anti-Racism training resources that will be shared nationally;
- returns on investments and the sale of property will help reduce the deficit by \$200,000 and \$200,000 will be reserved for future missional opportunities;
- Cost of living increase salaries in 2022 by 1.3%.

Archdeacon Scott said the budget projects a \$169,930 cash shortfall and a \$91,700 operational deficit, On the whole, the budget represents a \$3.9 million investment in mission ministry.

The diocese is positioned well despite a projected shortfall and is investing in the right places to make future income with future sale of properties, programs funded by investments, and community growth due to new programs and missional endeavours.

Motion #9 **2022 Budget**
Canon Jody Beck / The Venerable Peter Scott

THAT this Synod approve the 2022 diocesan budget.

CARRIED

Report on the 10th Sacred Circle

The Archdeacon for Truth, Reconciliation and Indigenous Ministries, Valerie Kerr, reported on the recent Sacred Circle, which is the national gathering of Indigenous Anglicans. The circle convened virtually this year between July 14 and July 17, with the theme of “Reclaiming Our Spiritual Wholeness: Our Journey to Self Determination”. Participants discussed governance related matters as the Indigenous Anglican Church moves towards self-determination.

Other Business

Results of the Election of Delegates to General Synod

The results of the electronic voting process, conducted in advance of synod, to elect delegates from Niagara to the General Synod which will convene in July 2022 were shared with members of synod.

In the order of the clergy: The Very Reverend Dr. Tim Dobbin, The Reverend Canon Katherine Morgan, and The Venerable Dr. David Anderson were elected.

In the order of the laity: Mr. Andrew Clinkard, Ms. Jodey Porter, and Ms. Susan Little were elected.

The Reverend Naomi Miller, the Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell and the Reverend Rob Towler will serve as alternates for the clergy, while Mr. Chris Miller, Ms. Amy Collard, Ms. Sharon White, and Ms. Kathy Szota will serve as alternates for the laity.

The bishop expressed gratitude for all who let their names stand and congratulated those elected.

Election of 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: The Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell (Brock), Thomas Littlewood (Greater Wellington), The Reverend Cheryl Barker (Hamilton-Haldimand), The Reverend Rob Towler (Lincoln), and Janice Whiteley and Winston Tinglin (Trafalgar); and alternates The Reverend Jody Balint (Brock), Neil Bell (Hamilton-Haldimand), Jodey Porter (Lincoln) and Jimmy Munuthi (Trafalgar).

Motion #10 The Venerable Bill Mous / Ms. Sue Thibodeau

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

CARRIED

Concluding Synod

The bishop gave her assent to all acts and resolutions during synod, giving thanks to all who laboured behind the scenes to make this second virtual synod possible.

After a time of prayer and reflection, the bishop offered a blessing.

Bishop Susan Bell adjourned the 147th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara at 1:00 pm.