

MINUTES OF THE 149TH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Saturday November 4, 2023 via Zoom videoconference

“Stewarding God's Gifts for Mission” 1 Peter 4-8

Call to Order & Territorial Acknowledgement

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

A territorial acknowledgment was given by the Venerable Terry DeForest and Mr. Noel Fraser of St. Paul's, Westdale from the shore of Princess Point in Hamilton.

Organizing Synod

Bishop Susan Bell welcomed all returning and first-time members to Synod. She gave an overview of the rules of order and a practice vote was conducted to help orient members to the Zoom polling tool. Privileges of the house were extended to the Reverend Canon Dr. Drew McDonald, diocesan stewardship & campaign advisor; the Reverend Colin Cameron, pastor of Burlington Anglican Lutheran Church; and Ms. Peggy Read, a Lutheran observer from Burlington Anglican Lutheran Church.

Credentials Committee Report

Chancellor Greg Tweney advised Synod that, as of 8:55am, 67 members of the order of clergy were present, representing 77% present of those eligible and 111 members of the order of laity present, representing 76% of those eligible. Out of the 79 total parishes, 61 were represented by at least one lay representative, for a total of 77% of parishes present. The quorum required for the transaction of Synod business was achieved.

Motion 1: Credential Committee Report

Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT the report of the credentials committee be accepted.

CARRIED

Notices of Motions

The chancellor advised members that, since the convening circular had been published, no additional motions have been received. He indicated that any motions for consideration at this Synod would need to be communicated in writing to Ms. Hannah Keller no later than 10:30 a.m.

Appointments to Diocesan Court

The bishop informed members of synod that she was appointing the following people to the diocesan court: The Venerable Peter Scott, The Venerable Sheila Van Zandwyk, The Reverend Canon Stuart Pike, Mr. Neil Bell, Ms. Sharon White, and Mr. Neil Culp.

Consent Agenda

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

A. Election of Synod Secretaries

that Carey dePass 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 149th Synod of the diocese.

B. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Synod

that the minutes of the 148th Synod of the diocese, as found in the convening circular, be approved.

C. Adoption of the Agenda

that the agenda as presented by the Synod Agenda Committee be adopted.

D. Reception of All Reports

that all reports found in the convening circular, including the audited financial statements and auditor's report, be received.

E. 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 (lay) and Mr. Tom Atterton (lay); for a term of two years.

F. 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

Ms. Amy Collard / The Reverend Garfield Wu

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

CARRIED

Gathering Prayers with Bishop's Charge to Synod

The Synod's opening worship included readings from 1 Peter 4:8-12 and Matthew 25:14-23. The Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell, Mr. Geoffrey Kiggundu, and Ms. Paige Keller assisted with the worship, led by the Right Reverend Susan Bell.

Bishop Susan began her charge by speaking about her choice of Gospel passage and what it meant for stewarding God's gifts for mission, the theme of the Synod. She noted the distinctiveness of the Parable of the Talents, describing it as a wisdom parable rather than a kingdom parable, and that Jesus told this story to his disciples to teach them to demonstrate their faithfulness as they anticipate the return of the Lord. She expressed that, in Matthew's Gospel, faithfulness is described as becoming more and more like Jesus by undertaking his ministry and all who would follow him are to do the same by visiting the sick and imprisoned, clothing the naked, welcoming the stranger, and feeding the hungry.

She also emphasized the term, "talent," which in the ancient Near East simply meant money, but in a contemporary context and language can mean an individual's capability and capacity. The bishop continued that the parable – and the theme of this year's Synod – asks Christians how they use those talents to increase the amount of love in parishes, in the diocese, and in the world and if they are living into the bold vision of the multiplication of all that they've been given.

Bishop Susan shared the many ways the diocese has been living into this vision. The bishop shared that the diocese has collectively helped almost 500 refugees to be resettled in Canada in the last decade. She also spoke about Niagara's support of The Primate's World Relief & Development Fund and its partners to respond to the conflicts in Ukraine and the Holy Land. Through Climate Justice Niagara Committee, the diocese is also engaging with one of the Lambeth Calls to join the Communion Forest initiative. She also detailed how the diocese has continued its commitment to truth and reconciliation and responding to the housing crisis by partnering with St. Matthew's House to provide deeply affordable housing for Indigenous and Black seniors through its 412 Barton project.

The bishop also highlighted the work of the Migrant Farmworkers Project, the developing diocesan anti-racism training program, and Mission in Acts in Oakville as important ministries that are vital to being a more inclusive Church. She also underscored the work of the newly designated All Saints Mission in Hamilton, expressing her gratitude for the Reverend Canon Mike Deed, Ms. Susie Kim, and the Reverend Rob Miller for their work as urban missionaries.

The bishop then turned to the work of renewal happening across the diocese, as many parishes continue to rebuild and reimagine their mission and vision. She noted the increase of faith formation practices, like Revive, Alpha, Cursillo, Christian Foundations, and Bible studies and encouraged synod members to support more of these initiatives in their parishes. She also highlighted outreach ministries through breakfast programs, mental health initiatives, clothing stores, community hubs, and more. With this foundation, the bishop stated that a mixed ecology model for our Church is being built; one that nurtures faith and then seeks to work to change the world with God's love; a Church that equips the saints for mission in the world.

Bishop Susan then indicated that in the coming year the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP) will be renewed through a process that she emphasized will help everyone to discern in a way that is "even bigger and bolder by the leading of the Spirit." She also informed parishes that a MAP 2.0 process is available for parishes to renew their existing MAPs and dream bigger.

Turning to the proposed diocesan campaign and the ongoing feasibility study, Bishop Susan admitted that there's never a perfect time for a campaign, but she knows that the Church has prospered through hard times before. The current study will help to discern whether the diocese should engage in the campaign. The bishop explained that a majority of the money raised, if the campaign moves forward, will be for the parishes, noting that 65% of the funds will support parishes to resource their own Spirit-inspired vision while the remaining 35% will be used to support common ministries – leadership, healing and reconciliation, and other shared diocesan ministries. She shared her hope that all members of Synod will support this campaign and her belief that it will be a "road out of the ravages of COVID" and as an act of faith in the future.

Bishop Susan spoke the proposed budget for 2024, describing a significant investment in ministry by developing a budget that reflects the challenges of the coming year, one that keeps expenditures flat despite cost increase. At the same time, she also highlighted the gradual recovery of parish finances.

The bishop then announced that she, along with Dean Tim Dobbin, will be appointing two new canons of Christ's Church Cathedral: the Reverend Pamela Guyatt and the Reverend Nirmal Mendis. For Canon Pamela, Bishop Susan highlighted her 20 years of service to the diocese, as well as her work as the Regional Dean for Lincoln, an honorary clerical secretary of Synod, and a member of Financial Advisory Committee. For Canon Nirmal, the bishop emphasized how his charism for rural ministry and his service to the Church has spanned the globe, starting in Sri Lanka and continuing in Ontario, where he has served in both the dioceses of Toronto and Moosonee before coming to Niagara in 2013.

Bishop Susan acknowledged Canon Donna Bomberry, who is the recent recipient of the Anglican Award of Merit. The Primate visited St. Alban's, Beamsville in September to honour Donna with this award for her distinguished service. She also acknowledged the extraordinary work of Dr. John Bowen, a recipient of the Alphege Award for Evangelism and Witness, and the Most Reverend Colin Johnson, who received the Cross of St Augustine for Services to the Anglican Communion. They will be celebrated at a Choral Evensong on December 10, 2023, at St. Peter's, Cobourg.

The bishop then offered her thanks to those who work hard in the service of the diocese: the regional deans and archdeacons; the members of Synod Council and other diocesan committees; Dr. Emily Hill and the Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby, for inhabiting entirely new roles with such intentionality;

Ms. Kemi Okwelum, for her work as the treasurer and her powers of analysis and interpretation; the Very Reverend Tim Dobbin and his partnership in ministry, in prayer, and in the leadership as dean; the Most Reverend Colin Johnson who is a wonderful and supportive assistant bishop; Canon Greg Tweney, for his wise counsel as chancellor; Ms. Jane Wyse, for her unending patience and her omnicompetence as executive assistant to the bishop; and the Venerable Bill Mous, for his ever-expanding range of gifts and service as Archdeacon of Niagara.

Bishop Susan concluded her charge by reminding the members of synod that God calls them to engage in the risk of faith; to become more and more like Christ and to live into the health and diversity of the mixed ecology – mission and tradition - the new and ancient Church. She asked all present to remember that without risk there is no growth and that with a vision, the people flourish.

--- BREAK ---

Missional Moment #1: Property Renewal as a Missional Enterprise

A short video was shown, which featured Canon Terry Charter, chair of the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Church Buildings (BACPR), discussing the missional ways that property renewal can support the ministry of the church. For instance, at the site of the former Grace Church in St. Catharines, the BACPR partnered with a local developer to transform the property into housing units to address the dire need for housing in the area. Synod Council has committed to ensuring that 20% of the proceeds from the property will go towards support affordable housing projects across the diocese. Canon Terry discussed how holding on to vacant church spaces can be strategic and described how the site of the former St. Peter's Anglican Church in Hamilton has found renewed purpose in hosting a daycare, a social services program, and a local faith community. He concluded by discussing the success of the new building space of All Saints Mission, highlighting the stewardship of the property's resources through the ownership of the church space and three residential condo buildings.

Capital Campaign Feasibility Study Update

The Reverend Canon Dr. Drew MacDonald, diocesan stewardship and campaign advisor, provided an update on the ongoing diocesan feasibility study for the upcoming capital campaign. He affirmed the study is a fact-finding mission, meant to gauge the support of all those across Niagara, and that he hopes all those who participate will do so with an open mind and heart.

Canon Drew also discussed the four upcoming town halls, hosted by the bishop, which will be open to everyone to learn more about the proposed campaign, ask questions, and provide their feedback. The sessions are planned for Church of the Transfiguration, St. Catharines, St. Michael's Anglican Church, Hamilton, Church of the Incarnation, Oakville, and St. George's, Guelph.

Mission Action Plan Reflection & Engagement Exercise

Dr. Emily Hill, parish development missionary, invited the members of synod to investigate and engage with the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP). She expressed her joy at how much the Diocese of Niagara, and all its parishes, have accomplished under the MAP's guidance. She announced that, as many congregations are now looking toward the future and living into their mission, a MAP 2.0 process will soon be available for those who've completed their previous initiatives.

She then shared the many ways that the diocese has lived into their mission since the MAP's adoption by Synod in 2019. She highlighted the ways that the diocese has created and implement opportunities to ignite and strengthen faith through the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, the Youth Leadership Training Program (YLTP), the Children and Youth Leaders Network, and missional ministries

such as Mission in Acts, St. Luke's Common Prayer, Cathedral Community of Prayer, and the missional witness in the neighbourhoods around All Saints, Hamilton. She also shared how diocesan culture has been reimagined and adapted to enable ministry through the renewal of Synod office staffing, the work of Synod Council, and the integrated worship space of All Saint Mission. Finally, she spoke about how the diocese has worked to prioritize social justice action with an emphasis on environmental justice through the efforts of the Anti-Racism Working Group and the Climate Justice Niagara Committee.

After sharing all that Niagara has accomplished through its Mission Action Plan, Emily invited the members of Synod to give their input on how the diocese can live into its mission into the future. She invited the members to join in a breakout room to discuss two questions: What is God calling our diocese to do and be over the next couple of years? What is on your heart for the mission of our diocese? Following the exercise, Emily invited the members to share their notes at the conclusion of Synod.

Audit Matters

Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements

Ms. Kemi Okwelum, spoke briefly about the 2022 auditor's report and audited consolidated financial statements, which was received at the outset of the Synod as part of the convening circular.

Appointment of Auditors for 2023

Motion 3: Appointment of Auditors

The Reverend Dr. Eleanor Clitheroe / Mr. Tony Denning

THAT KPMG be appointed as auditors for the fiscal year 2023.

CARRIED

Missional Moment #2: General Synod – Let There Be Greening

A brief video was presented, showcasing the recent General Synod, which took place from June 27 to July 2, 2023. The assembly took place with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and gathered under the theme of "Let there be Greening." The video included highlights of Niagara's participation in the assembly, including Bishop Susan Bell moving Resolution A204 which encouraged parishes across Canada to address the ongoing climate emergency; Ms. Susan Little sharing her excitement about a new parish engagement resource for social and ecological justice; Mr. Adam McNeil speaking towards Resolution A122, which moved to authorize pastoral liturgies for gender transition and affirmation; and Dean Tim Dobbin seconding Resolution A205, which affirms the right to safe drinking water for all.

2024 Diocesan Budget Presentation

The Venerable Peter Scott, chair of the Missional Budget Planning Committee (MBPC), along with Ms. Kemi Okwelum, treasurer and director of finance, and the Very Reverend Dr. Tim Dobbin, dean of Niagara, presented the proposed diocesan budget for 2024. They noted that Bishop Susan asked the committee to reflect on the Synod theme in their discernment and contemplation process.

Dean Tim elaborated on the use of Diocesan Mission and Ministry (DMM) contributions and the ways that the funds go to supporting God's mission through ministry at the parish, diocesan, national and international levels of the Church. Within Niagara, DMM contributions help to strengthen local parishes by providing clergy benefits and centralised support for payroll, human resources, communications, social justice, stewardship and other services and programmes offered by diocesan staff. They also help support innovative forms of ministry through various diocesan missionaries. Outside of the diocese, DMM funds help resource the Church through various national and international ministries, including the Council of the North, KAIROS, the World Council of Churches, and the Anglican Communion.

Archdeacon Peter gave examples of how the proposed budget is mission-shaped, pointing to the budget's investment in the ministry of communications through provisions for the livestreaming of diocesan services, and the development of a new communications strategy under the leadership of Connor Jay. He also shared how the budgeting for WOW and Chaplaincy Grants has changed and is now drawn from the Outreach Survive and Thrive Endowment. Archdeacon Peter also shared how, through the budget, the diocese is re-focussing on how to provide support for children, youth, and families through equipping the ministry of programs like the Children, Youth & Family Ministry Leaders Network, the Youth Leadership Training Program and The Table. In all of this, he emphasized that the 2024 budget proposes to invest, prudently, faithfully, and expectantly, more than \$3.7 million for the building up and resourcing of God's Church in Niagara.

Treasurer Kemi Okwelum then provided some details about the proposed budget. She explained that, in terms of revenue, \$2.5 million will be contributed from parishes via the DMM. She elaborated that while in any given year the diocese doesn't collect the full amount that is budgeted, owing to unexpected financial situations in parishes, they also receive catch-up contributions from others. The lower diocesan revenue that is forecast for 2024 is a result of the 3-year averaging in DMM calculations. As such, the impact of the pandemic on revenues will be felt most fully for next year's diocesan budget.

Regarding expenditures, Kemi explained that significant efforts have been made to reduce costs while still maintaining capacity for ministry. Expenses held to a marginal 0.64% increase for 2024, despite rising inflation and cost of living pressures. The proposed budget also takes into account a 3% cost of living increase for salaries and stipends recommended by the Human Resources for Ministry Committee in addition to a 2% increase to mandatory employer contributions.

The 2024 budget projects an operating deficit of \$973,000, however, after investment draws, this amount is reduced to less than \$300,000. Synod Council has allocated funds to cover this deficit from a mortgage that will come due in 2024, resulting in an overall operating surplus. Additionally, reliance on unrestricted general investment funds will be less than last year and the expectation is that, as revenues continue rebound, necessary reliance on these funds will continue to decline over the next five years.

The Reverend Canon Dr. Catherine Crawford Browning, from St. John the Divine, Cayuga, asked about the use of investment funds to close the deficit and asked if the surplus from the mortgage payments could be used to lower the DMM for struggling parishes. Ms. Bev Groombridge, from the Church of Our Saviour The Redeemer, Stoney Creek, asked for clarification about funding the costs of the proposed campaign. Mr. Peter Paton, from St. George's Anglican Church in Georgetown, spoke to the motion and asked that for future budgets to make budget expenses for diocesan missions, like those to the migrant farmworkers, more visible and clearer. Ms. Sue Crowe Connelly, from Christ' Church Cathedral, Hamilton, asked if diocesan investments are in line with its environmental values.

Motion 4: 2024 Budget

Ms. Kemi Okwelum / The Venerable Peter Scott

THAT this Synod approve the 2024 diocesan budget.

CARRIED

--- BREAK ---

Missional Moment #3: Introducing our Diocesan Missioners

A short video was shown to spotlight the ministry of Niagara's two diocesan missioners.

Dr. Emily Hill serves as parish development missioner with a focus on the development and renewal of the diocese's parish communities in support of the diocese's vision and mission-driven initiatives

through the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP). In the past two years, 47 parishes have developed MAPs, creating 469 different initiatives through the process, including seasonal retreats at St. Andrew's, Grimsby, a speaker series at St. John's, Port Dalhousie, and meditation groups at St. Mark's, Orangeville.

The Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby serves as community missionary with a focus on building new missional and contextual ecclesial communities. Within his work he highlighted the ministries of the Reverend Canon Mike Deed and All Saints Mission, the Reverend Rob Miller and the developing monastic community in North Hamilton, the Reverend Garfield Wu and Mission in Acts in Oakville, the Reverend Antonio Illas and the Migrant Farmworkers Project, and finally Ms. Susie Kim's lay ministry to the unchurched in Hamilton's Durand, Kirkendall & Strathcona neighbourhoods.

Anglican Communion Forest Initiative Presentation

Ms. Irene Pang, chair of Climate Justice Niagara, and Deirdre Pike, program consultant for justice and outreach, gave a presentation on the work of the global Anglican Communion Forest Initiative. They shared how the Communion Forest Initiative arose from the Lambeth Conference as a practical, spiritual, and symbolic response to the environmental crisis and an act of Christian hope for the well-being of humanity and all God's creation. Supported by Archbishop Justin Welby, bishops, and other Anglican leaders, it is a shared expression of the Communion's commitment to the Anglican Fifth Mark of Mission: to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Deirdre and Irene explained how Bishop Susan has entrusted Climate Justice Niagara with overseeing the diocese's involvement with this initiative. They shared the ways that parishes can take part in this missional act through protecting against deforestation, restoring degraded environments, starting forest initiatives on church land, and helping others become involved in their work. They also highlighted emerging partnerships with environment organizations and conservation authorities.

Their presentation concluded by inviting members to bring the Communion Forest idea back to their parishes, noting that Climate Justice Niagara would welcome new members to support this work.

Canon Changes

Amendment to Canon 1.1 (1)

Canon Greg Tweney informed the members of Synod that only one Canon was up for amendment this year. Canon 1.1 concerns the composition of Synod, and the amendment would seek to address the emerging presence of joint Anglican-Lutheran churches within the diocese. This change would allow for Lutheran pastors, who lead joint congregations, to be represented at Synod.

The Reverend Canon Matthew Griffin, from the Church of the Nativity, Hamilton, asked about the implications of the term "rostered" within the composition of Synod. It was explained that "rostered clergy" is a Lutheran term for clergy who have been duly appointed by their bishop.

Motion 5: Amendment to Canon 1.1 (1) - Composition of Synod

Ms. Kemi Okwelum / The Venerable Peter Scott

THAT the following section be added to Canon 1.1 (1):

'(12) The rostered clergy, duly appointed, and the lay representatives, duly elected, of any joint Anglican-Lutheran congregations recognized by the Bishop of Niagara. For the purposes of this section the number of lay representatives to be elected shall be determined in accordance with Canon 4.1 (17(b)).'

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

Other Business

Results of the Election of Delegates to Provincial Synod

The results of the electronic voting process, conducted in advance of Synod, to elect delegates from Niagara to the Provincial Synod happening in the Diocese of Algoma in 2024 were shared.

In the order of clergy: the Venerable Terry Holub, the Venerable Bill Mous, the Reverend Deacon Sheila Plant, the Reverend Rob Towler were elected.

In the order of laity: Ms. Janice Whitely, Ms. Amy Collard, Ms. Jodey Porter, Ms. Susan Little were elected. Mr. John Laidlaw will serve as the first alternate.

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 following candidates were acclaimed for their region: the Reverend Jody Szoke (Brock), Mr. Thomas Littlewood (Greater Wellington), the Reverend Rob Towler (Lincoln) and Ms. Susan Little (Hamilton-Haldimand). The following alternates were appointed by the Nominations Committee for each region: the Reverend Deacon Rod McDowell (Brock), the Reverend Canon Paul Walker (Greater Wellington), Ms. Jodey Porter (Lincoln), and Mr. Neil Bell (Hamilton-Haldimand).

In the region of Trafalgar, an election was held to determine both representatives. To reestablish a staggered term for the two representatives, Archdeacon Bill Mous indicated that the delegate who received the most votes would receive a two-year term, the second-most would receive a one-year term, and the third-most would become the alternate. As such, Ms. Amy Collard will serve as a regional representative for 2024 and 2025, Mr. Winston Tinglin will serve as a regional representative for 2024, and Ms. Janice Whiteley will serve as the alternate representative for 2024.

Motion 6: Synod Council Election

The Venerable Bill Mous / Canon Greg Tweney

THAT this Synod elect the regional members of Synod Council and alternate regional members, as reported by the Secretary of Synod.

CARRIED

Concluding Synod

The bishop gave her assent to all acts and resolutions during Synod.

Bishop Susan Bell then took a moment to share her deep concern for the many conflicts happening in the world, particularly in the Holy Land. She emphasized the need to live into the promises made in baptism to respect the dignity of every human being, and to always search of the Christian response to living in such difficult times. Bishop Susan asked all members of synod to pray for peace and to the end the cycle of violence and polarization that leads to these conflicts. Admitting that it is difficult to speak about these issues without upsetting some, she shared a reflection by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The bishop professed that it takes courage to ask for justice without spreading hate and asked for God's strength to do such things in Jesus' name.

After some final words of gratitude and a time of worship, the bishop offered a final blessing.

Bishop Susan Bell adjourned the 149th Synod of the Diocese of Niagara at 12:57 pm.