

MINUTES OF THE 151ST SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

Saturday November 1, 2025 via Zoom videoconference

"Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee."

Call to Order & Territorial Acknowledgement

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

A territorial acknowledgment was given by the Very Reverend Dr. Tim Dobbin, rector of Christ's Church Cathedral & dean of Niagara.

Organizing Synod

Bishop Susan Bell welcomed all returning and first-time members to Synod. A practice vote was conducted to familiarize members of Synod with the voting platform.

Credentials Committee Report

Chancellor Greg Tweney advised Synod that—as of 8:55am—80 members of the order of clergy were present, representing 88.8% of those eligible and 112 members of the order of laity present, representing 78.8% of those eligible. Out of the 78 total parishes, 61 were represented by at least one lay representative, for a total of 78.8% 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 Reverend Canon Dr. David Anderson, Mr. Neil Bell, Ms. Nancy Coombs, Mr. Neil Culp, The Venerable Paul Walker, and The Venerable Sheila Van Zandwyk.

Consent Agenda

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

A. Election of Synod Secretaries

that Mrs. Susan Little be elected as the honorary lay secretary of synod and The Reverend Canon Pamela Guyatt be elected as the honorary clerical secretary of synod for the 151st Synod of the diocese.

B. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Synod

that the minutes of the 150th 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 Canon Garfield Adams (clergy), Mr. Tom Atterton (lay), and The Reverend Sarah Grondin (clergy); 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. Sarah Bird / The Reverend Cheryl Barker

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 Isaiah 6:1-8, Ephesians 4:1-6, and John 1:35-50. The Reverend Canon Nirmal Mendis, Canon Donna Bomberry, Mrs. Judy Conning, the Reverend Deacon Roderick McDowell, and the Reverend Canon Bahman Kalantari assisted with the worship, led by the Right Reverend Dr. Susan Bell.

The bishop began her charge by giving thanks for the faithfulness, resilience, and generosity that continues to animate the life of the Diocese of Niagara. Gathering once more as a diocesan family, she invited members to discern the movement of God's Spirit among them and to see themselves as part of a living, breathing body. Her charge was framed around three interwoven strands: a hymn, a vision statement, and a Gospel story; each illuminating what it means for the diocesan community to be consecrated to God's purposes in this time of renewal and change.

Drawing first on Frances Ridley Havergal's hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee," Bishop Bell reflected that consecration means offering every part of life to God's service. Far from being an act of grim duty, this offering is joyful: what is entrusted to Love is transformed by Love. The bishop reminded Synod that this hymn is not only a personal prayer but also a communal one.

The theme of consecrated life connects directly to the diocesan vision statement to be "Called to Life and Compelled to Love." Bishop Bell emphasized that all Christian vocation begins with God's call, and that responding to that call frees the Church to live abundantly for the sake of the world. To be "compelled to love" is not to be coerced but to be moved by compassion and gratitude to see Christ's face in others. The vision statement unites personal transformation with the renewal of the Church's common life, calling Anglicans in Niagara to witness divine love in a world that hungers for hope.

In the Gospel reading, the bishop found the same pattern of call and response. Jesus' invitation to the first disciples models the heart of discipleship: relationship before dogma, invitation before instruction. Jesus sees people as they are and as they can become, naming divine possibility within them.

Bishop Bell urged the members of Synod to adopt this Christ-like way of seeing, recognizing in one another the seeds of new life.

Bishop Bell then described consecration as both surrender and renewal. In a rapidly changing landscape of faith that is marked by smaller congregations, tighter budgets, and social uncertainty, the Church is invited to deep listening and courageous experimentation. The diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP) continues to anchor this discernment, fostering accountability and direction. The bishop highlighted developments in faith formation through the diocesan appointment of the Reverend Monica Romig Green, partnerships through the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, ongoing advocacy for climate and social justice, new initiatives supporting youth mental health, and the creation of the St. Brigid's Community—a contemplative community for young adults. She stressed renewed attention to stewardship as discipleship and celebrated the growth of diocesan missions and leadership development through the 150th Anniversary Curacy Fund.

Focusing on recent signs of hope, Bishop Bell noted that average Sunday attendance has risen by 18% over the previous year, Easter attendance by 9%, and diocesan finances have stabilized with the first balanced budget since 2019. Giving has increased and maturing mission congregations are beginning to reinvest in diocesan life. While challenges remain, especially in deepening discipleship and stewardship, the bishop emphasized that these indicators reflect renewal and resilience.

Bishop Bell then gave special recognition to two clergy, who in their ministry, have distinguished themselves through extraordinary service to the diocese. For their service to Niagara, the Reverend Cheryl Barker and the Reverend Will Alakas were appointed as honorary canons of Christ's Church Cathedral. The bishop also thanked diocesan staff members, acknowledging the dedicated work of Canon Drew MacDonald, Archdeacon Bill Mous, Chancellor Greg Tweney, Archbishop Colin Johnson, Dean Tim Dobbin, Treasurer Christine Morrow, and Ms. Jane Wyse.

Concluding her charge, Bishop Bell invited the Synod to join her in Havergal's prayer of offering. She called upon God to consecrate the diocese's parishes, missions, leaders, and hearts for renewed service and to make the Church in Niagara an embodiment of resurrection life. Echoing Isaiah's call in the reading, the bishop affirmed that consecration is the joyful surrender of the Church to divine purpose, transforming fear into faith and duty into delight. For the sake of the Gospel and the healing of the nations, she concluded, the people of Niagara are sent once again to live their calling joyfully and to love generously.

— BREAK —

Missional Moment #1: Designated Diocesan Missions

A short video was shown, which featured the Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby, community missionary, describing the work of the various diocesan missions across Niagara.

All Saints Mission—led by the Reverend Canon Mike Deed—focuses on providing hospitality and community to the de-churched and unchurched people in downtown Hamilton. The Migrant Farmworker Mission—led by the Reverend Peter Ciallella—provides for the material and spiritual needs of temporary farm workers from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Mission in Acts, Oakville—led by the Reverend Canon Garfield Adams—engages with Mandarin-speaking newcomers to Canada. The St. Luke's Community—led by the Reverend Rob Miller—engages with spiritual-seekers in Hamilton's North End neighbourhood, who are exploring contemplative and Anglo-Catholic spirituality. Hamilton's Well—led by Ms. Susie Kim, a Licensed Lay Missioner—reaches out to the "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR) through meditative and contemplative practices.

Audit Matters

Auditor's Report & Audited Financial Statements

Ms. Christine Morrow, diocesan treasurer and director of finance, spoke briefly about the 2024 auditor's report and audited consolidated financial statements, which were received at the outset of the Synod as part of the convening circular. She noted that the diocese's financial health was good and stable.

Appointment of Auditors for 2025

Motion 3: Appointment of Auditors

The Reverend Canon Dr. Eleanor Clitheroe / Mr. Tony Denning

THAT KPMG be appointed as auditors for the fiscal year 2025.

CARRIED

Breakout Groups: Exploring the Mixed Ecology Model of Ministry

The Reverend Canon Dr. Ian Mobsby, diocesan community missionary, and Dr. Emily Hill, parish development missionary, led a session with members of synod on the mixed ecology model of ministry for parishes.

Canon Mobsby began by reviewing the definition of mixed ecology as a term that describes how traditional parishes can co-exist with non-traditional ministry. Dr. Hill described the structural features of mixed ecology parishes, with the traditional congregation as a central hub and a network of fresh expressions connecting with it. She also explained the reason why mixed ecology matters in the current day's context of parishes. Canon Mobsby then provided an example of a successful mixed-ecology parish by sharing the story of the Church of Our Savior The Redeemer in Stoney Creek, and described the process of tending to a garden as the context for a mission.

After concluding their presentation, Canon Mobsby and Dr. Hill invited members of Synod to participate in a breakout room session to discuss a scenario about how their church could respond to spiritual curiosity without expecting participation in Sunday worship.

Following the exercise, Dr. Hill and Canon Mobsby provided some suggested feedback for the scenario, which included effective listening, trying and testing new ideas, sustaining the experimental alongside the established, and exploring next steps.

2026 Diocesan Budget Presentation

The Reverend Canon Dr. Eleanor Clitheroe, chair of the Missional Budget Planning Committee (MBPC), and Ms. Christine Morrow, treasurer and director of finance, presented the proposed diocesan budget for 2026. They shared that the budget is framed within the bishop's chosen theme for Synod and St. Paul's message in Romans 12 calling the faithful to be living sacrifices.

Canon Clitheroe noted that the MBPC's work was guided by a mandate to create a mission-shaped budget aligned with the diocesan Mission Action Plan (MAP), episcopal priorities, and strategic objectives. The 2026 budget reflects growing financial health and a unified diocesan direction, with nearly \$4 million invested in God's mission and a projected operating surplus before capital items, the first since before the pandemic.

Canon Clitheroe also highlighted five key priorities: investment in the MAP, launching the St. Brigid's Community, enhancing mission sustainability, supporting parishes and chaplaincies, and maintaining Cathedral Place. Budget allocations include \$1.1 million for MAP initiatives, \$30,000 in external funding

for St. Brigid's, \$275,000 for parish and mission support, and \$100,000 for Cathedral Place capital work, marking a renewed commitment to mission, ministry, and stewardship across the diocese.

Ms. Morrow reviewed the details of the budget, which plans to invest over \$4 million in the mission and ministry of the diocese. Operating revenue of approximately \$2.92 million will come primarily from parish contributions, reflecting recovery from the pandemic era with a projected \$300,000 increase. Expenditures are forecasted to grow modestly by 3.6%, with the largest increase due to a 3.8% overall cost-of-living adjustment for diocesan staff.

Key highlights include an increased General Synod apportionment of \$567,000, higher Cathedral Place repair costs, minor adjustments in diocesan and mission expenses, and streamlined property schedules anticipating a \$16,000 deficit. A new schedule details \$134,000 investments in designated diocesan missions. The budget projects a modest pre-capital cash surplus of \$58,000, with sufficient funds to cover anticipated capital deficits.

Canon Clitheroe concluded by highlighting the diocese's strong financial recovery from COVID-19 and emphasized that the budget supports key missional priorities. They commended the budget for approval, noting it enables continued faith development, mission work, and care for creation.

Mr. Michael Smith, from the Church of the Incarnation, Oakville, asked if the budget includes a provision for diocesan investments of more than 5%; Ms. Morrow explained that return on investments are not included in the budget, as they are a non-cash item unless drawn.

Motion 4: 2026 Budget

Ms. Christine Morrow / The Reverend Canon Dr. Eleanor Clitheroe

THAT this Synod approve the 2026 diocesan budget.

CARRIED

— BREAK —

Canon Changes

Canon Greg Tweney informed the members of synod that six canons have been put forward to Synod for amendment this year and outlined the process for making canonical changes.

Amendment to Canon 1.1

The chancellor explained that the College of Deacons has requested the option of electing an alternate member of Synod—similar to the provision of lay representatives to Synod—such that if one of their elected members is not able to attend Synod, an alternate can attend in their stead

Motion 5: Amendment to Canon 1.1 – Composition of Synod

Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT the following section be added to Canon 1.1:

4. The College of Deacons may annually elect up to two substitute members of Synod from among its members.

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

Repeal of Canon 1.9(1)(n)

Canon 1.9(1)(n) provides membership of a representative of the Canterbury Hills Board of Directors on Synod Council. Archdeacon Mous explained that the proposed amendment comes after a governance

review by the board and would remove the representative. The secretary of synod clarified that the board chose not to appoint a representative in 2025, and that other diocesan affiliated boards—such as St. Matthew’s House—do not have representation on Synod Council.

Motion 6: Amendment to Canon 1.9 – Synod Council
The Venerable Bill Mous / Canon Greg Tweney

THAT sections (n) of Canon 1.9 be deleted.

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

Amendment to Canon 2.10(2)

Section 2 of Canon 2.10 outlines the rights, responsibilities, and duties of the congregation of Christ’s Church Cathedral, as well as the specific exemptions due to the cathedral’s unique position within the diocese. Canon Tweney explained that the amendment would acknowledge the responsibility of the cathedral’s established Cemetery Board for the upkeep of the columbarium.

Motion 7: Amendment to Canon 2.10 – The Cathedral of the Diocese of Niagara
Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT section (2) of Canon 2.10 be amended to read:

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 and the columbarium, which shall remain the responsibility of the Cathedral congregation.

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

Amendment of Canon 3.5(5)(c)

Archdeacon Mous explained that section 5(c) of Canon 3.5 outlines the membership of the Executive Council of the College of Deacons, which has requested clarity about the length of term for members elected to said council.

Motion 8: Amendment to Canon 3.5 – College of Deacons
The Venerable Bill Mous / Canon Greg Tweney

THAT section 5(c) of Canon 3.5 be amended to read:

c) three delegates duly elected from the membership of the College of Deacons, for a two-year term;

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

Amendment to Canon 4.1(4)

Section 4 of Canon 4.1 governs the requirements of parishes’ Annual Vestry Meetings. First, Canon Tweney explained that vesting extraordinary annual vestry meeting deadline extensions with the

bishop, rather than with Synod Council, will lead to more timely decisions and free up valuable time at Synod Council meetings. Additionally, Vestry regulations enacted during the pandemic recognized that communication about a meeting is best to happen in a number of ways, not just during Sunday worship services. The amendment also better reflects the business of an annual vestry meeting. Lastly, in response to regular inquiries, a new clause was added to provide some guidance about nominations, drawing on the canons of the Diocese of Huron. In response to a question, the chancellor clarified that nothing in this canon change would prohibit a parish from holding its annual vestry meeting over two sessions, where one dealt with the proposed budget for the coming year.

Motion 9: Amendment to Canon 4.1 – Vestries and Churchwardens

Canon Greg Tweney / The Venerable Bill Mous

THAT section 4 of Canon 4.1 be amended to read:

- (a) An Annual Vestry Meeting shall be held by the 1st of March each year, or on such day as may be fixed by the Synod. In extraordinary circumstances, this deadline may be extended with the approval of the Bishop.*
- (b) Notice of the annual meeting shall be given during Divine Service on the two Sundays immediately preceding the said meeting, and communicated widely to the membership using other means available to the parish.*
- (c) The annual meeting shall be for the purpose of receiving the audited accounts of the Vestry, the presentation of a budget, and subsequently of electing and appointing Churchwardens, Lay Representatives, Parish Council members, and other officers, and for the transaction of other business connected with the temporalities of the Church.*
- (d) In the absence of an established nominations committee, the Churchwardens and Deputy Churchwardens (if any) shall act as the nominations committee. Further nominations with the consent of the nominee(s) may be made at the Vestry meeting.*

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

Amendment of Canon 4.7(9)

Archdeacon Mous explained that *An Act to Simplify the Sales of Property Held in Trust for the Church of England in Canada in the Diocese of Niagara* (1923) grants the diocese some discretion over the disposition of trust property where it is impossible or inadvisable to maintain the original charitable trust's purpose, however, this discretion is not currently articulated in the corresponding canon. The proposed change would harmonize the text of the canon with diocesan governing legislation such that the full powers available to the Synod are retained.

Motion 10: Amendment to Canon 4.7 – As to Purchasing, Selling or Mortgaging Church Property

The Venerable Bill Mous / Canon Greg Tweney

THAT section 9 of Canon 4.7 be amended to read:

9. The proceeds realized from the sale of property shall be paid to the Synod to be held and invested by the Synod under the same trusts, uses, endowments or purposes as

those for which the said property were acquired, or in the case of a change of circumstances, it becomes impossible or inadvisable to do so, such proceeds may, if so desired by the vestry, and with the approval of the Synod be applied for other church purposes for the benefit of the parish, mission, or congregation on whose behalf the said trust, use, endowment or purpose was created.

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

Report on the 44th General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada

The Venerable Terry Holub, from St. David's, Welland, Ms. Paige Keller, from St. George's, Guelph, and Mr. Adam MacNeil, from the Church of the Resurrection, Hamilton, spoke about the 44th Session of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, which took place from June 23-29 in London, Ontario.

Mr. MacNeil expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to represent the diocese, describing the gathering as a profound experience of unity and faith across the national Church. He highlighted the diversity of passions among delegates, reflecting the many ways God equips the Church. The Synod's theme, "They will soar on wings like eagles," inspired a spirit of discernment and renewal. Mr. MacNeil noted the energy of the opening Eucharist, featuring the Most Reverend Michael Curry as preacher, and the balance of worship, discussion, and community-building throughout the week. He also shared his involvement in passing motions to increase youth representation on the Council of General Synod (CoGS) and to create a National Youth Council, both warmly supported by delegates.

Ms. Keller shared her experience as a youth delegate, noting that youth delegates participated in an orientation led by Ms. Sheilagh McGlynn, national youth animator for the Anglican Church of Canada, who provided ongoing guidance and support throughout the week. The orientation helped delegates, many of whom were attending their first Synod, build relationships and understand General Synod procedures. Youth and young adults played a significant role in the proceedings, successfully bringing forward two motions, both of which passed. The experience highlighted the diversity of perspectives among participants and the respectful, faith-based dialogue that united them. Inspired by this environment of encouragement and inclusion, she gained the confidence to stand for election to CoGS and was elected, alongside Bishop Susan Bell, to represent the Province of Ontario.

Archdeacon Holub spoke about his impression as a first-time delegate to General Synod, focusing on the strength, hope, and unity of the Anglican Church of Canada. He discussed the ways that the Niagara delegation positively impacted every aspect of General Synod. Archdeacon Holub concluded the report by reflecting on the primatial election that took place on June 26, resulting in the election of the Right Reverend Shane Parker, Bishop of Ottawa, as the 15th Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada.

The bishop gave thanks for all who represented Niagara at the Synod. She invited prayers for the Church and the new Primate, the Most Reverend Shane Parker, in the coming triennium as it pursues transformational by living into the six pathways of the Primate's Commission Report.

Other Business

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 nominees were acclaimed for their region: Mrs. Susan Little (Hamilton-Haldimand), Mr. Mark Young (Lincoln) and Ms. Amy Collard (Trafalgar). Alternate delegates for the regions of Hamilton-Haldimand, Lincoln and Trafalgar will be appointed by the bishop following Synod.

In the regions of Brock and Greater Wellington, elections were held to determine a lay or clergy representative. In the region of Brock, the Reverend Rob Towler was selected as the nominee, with Mrs. Leslie Kennedy serving as the alternate. In the region of Greater Wellington, the Reverend Victor Kischak was selected as the nominee, with Mr. Bryan Elliston serving as the alternate.

Motion 11: Synod Council Election

The Venerable Bill Mous / Mrs. Leslie Kennedy

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

CARRIED

Anniversary Greetings

Bishop Susan Bell spoke to members of Synod about the unique ecumenical relationship between the Anglican Church of Canada, the United Church of Canada, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, especially regarding the support of university chaplaincies. Both churches are celebrating major anniversary years, and a motion was put forward to have the bishop extend a formal greeting to each church on the occasion of these anniversaries.

Motion 12: Anniversary Greetings

The Very Reverend Dr. Tim Dobbin / The Reverend Aaron Orear

THAT this Synod extend warm greetings and congratulations to the United Church of Canada on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of their formative Union, June 1925.

AND THAT this Synod extend warm greetings and congratulations to the Presbyterian Church in Canada on the occasion of their 150th anniversary.

AND THAT this Synod give thanks for its ongoing ecumenical relationships with the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church of Canada, especially the unique witness of our ecumenical university chaplaincies.

CARRIED

Missional Moment #2: 150th Diocesan Anniversary Celebration

A brief video was presented, showcasing highlights from the diocese's 150th anniversary year, with an emphasis on the impact of curacies and the faithfulness and diversity of parishes and communities.

The Reverend Dr. Charles Meeks, assistant curate of St. Paul's, Westdale; the Reverend David Shumaker, assistant curate of St. George's, Guelph; and the Reverend Dena Thomas, assistant curate of St. John the Evangelist, Hamilton, were all featured providing reflections on their curacies.

Concluding Synod

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

After some final words of gratitude and a closing prayer, the bishop offered a final blessing.

The Right Reverend Dr. Susan Bell adjourned the 151st Synod of the Diocese of Niagara at 12:42 pm.