

DIOCESAN EPOST

Celebrating the Diocese of British Columbia

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First woman bishop elected in historic virtual synod



The Reverend Anna Greenwood-Lee is the bishop-elect



Livestreaming the synod: Kate Newman (cathedral coordinator of children, youth and families) adjusts the video camera as the team prepares for the diocese's episcopal synod, held Sept. 26 and livestreamed from Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. Photo by Susan Down.

BY SUSAN DOWN

In a year when a global pandemic dramatically constrained normal operations and procedures, the Anglican Diocese of B.C. turned to technology to produce the first Zoom-facilitated and livestreamed Anglican episcopal synod in the country on Sept. 26. The delegates to the 2020 election delivered another historic first as well, voting in Anna Greenwood-Lee, who will become the diocese's first woman bishop when she is installed in early 2021.

Initially planned for June 2020, and postponed due to the pandemic, the episcopal synod attracted a field of seven candidates, including four from parishes on Vancouver Island (Kevin Arndt, Alastair Singh-McCollum, Lon Towstego, and Dawna Wall), one from Vancouver (Douglas Fenton), one working in the UK (Jennifer Cooper) and Greenwood-Lee from Calgary.

Greenwood-Lee, 45, will be one of the youngest of the 14 bishops in the diocese (the diocese's first bishop, George Hills, was 43

when he was consecrated in 1859). She succeeds Bishop Logan McMenemy who retired in May.

Currently the incumbent at St. Laurence in Calgary where she has served since 2006, Greenwood-Lee admitted it will take time to move the busy family household which includes her in-laws. She and her husband, James, a mathematician at Athabasca University, have two children: Fin, 12, and Ava, 16.

During her 20-year career in the ministry, the bishop-elect has shown leadership in social

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Running an election, Anglican-style

Amid fevered and rancorous election campaigns in BC and the US, our Anglican diocese held a virtual election Sept. 26 with a minimum of fuss. There were no slogans, banners

or campaign signs in sight, just thoughtful deliberation.

Other than the emphasis on substance rather than flash, what's different about electing a church leader is that the winner needs to have a majority vote in both sectors – laypeople and the clergy. Eventual bishop-elect, Anna Greenwood-Lee, led in the total number

of votes from the start, and by the third ballot, as the candidates dropped out and the field narrowed, she had already received the needed majority votes from the laity. The clergy favoured Victoria candidate Dawna Wall, who ran a close second. On the fifth ballot, only the two women were left in the race, separated

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Coming home



BY THE VERY REVEREND
M. ANSLEY TUCKER

Message from the Administrator of the Diocese

Well, it took seven ballots, two of them where the clergy and the laity took differing views of the desired outcome, but at about 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 26, the people of the diocese of British Columbia elected the Reverend Anna Greenwood-Lee to be our 14th bishop.

There will be lots of opportunities, some in this edition of the *Post*, to learn more about our bishop-elect.

Here, however, I want to draw attention to three things.

First, let us acknowledge the very

fine group of nominees who allowed their names, their stories, their opinions, and their reputations to be opened to us. Usually, we get to choose what we say to whom. But in this case, there were no protections, just honest self-offering to the scrutiny of people known and unknown, each with their own priorities and biases. I want to thank all our candidates, and to remind them, and us, that we were blessed to find within the church seven excellent priests, each with serious gifts for episcopal ministry.

Second, I want to say a word to those parishes and communities whose clergy are “coming home” to them. You have been on tenterhooks, wanting to support your candidate, and yet wanting him or her to stay. I am going to let you in on an important dynamic in an episcopal election. To give yourself entirely to the nomination process, which is both time-consuming and emotionally taxing, you need to actually imagine yourself as a bishop. This means you also have to imagine yourself “not where you are.” I can tell you from experience, it takes a little while for unelected candidates to reconnect and fully re-engage with

a role and a community they had to imagine leaving. Please, as a church, let us be mindful and gentle as our friends – *our friends* – return to us.

And third, I want to congratulate our diocese on designing and conducting our first-ever electronic and remotely attended synod. Months of preparation preceded this, including the revision of our regulations in order to allow such a thing to happen, and the construction and testing of complex technical procedures. I had the privilege of spending election day at the cathedral, close to the “nerve centre” of the election. There I counted no fewer than 13 professionals and volunteers managing the technical side of the synod, and another dozen or so serving in defined leadership and support roles – everything from chairing the synod to sanitizing the space afterward.

Blessings and peace to all: we did it, we did in the name of God, and we have a story for history books! Welcome, Bishop-elect Anna. ■

The Very Reverend M. Ansley Tucker is the administrator of the diocese, and the dean of Columbia.

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Balancing tradition and fresh insight

An excerpt from the homily given by Archbishop Melissa Skelton at the opening eucharist of the electoral synod.

“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven” Jesus tells the disciples, “is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” - Matthew 13 44-52

As I think about this statement and the election today of the next bishop of the Diocese of British Columbia (the Islands and Inlets), this, it seems to me is what you are being asked to do. Whether you feel you have been trained or not for the kingdom of God, whether you feel you're ready or not for the kingdom of God, today you get to be like those scribes whom Jesus compares to householders rummaging around in their stuff looking to bring out new treasures and old treasures, presumably to put both to use.

And, of course, the way you get to bring out these new and old treasures is through your decisions today. For, both Matthew's Jesus and we, Anglicans, believe that there are treasures to discover and to take hold

of in what is new and what is old. We believe that both new treasures and old treasures give us and give the Church what it needs to live a life guided by the Spirit, what it needs to live a life that contributes to the realm of God coming into being. And so just to paint a bit of a picture, that new iPad you got last Christmas – that's a new treasure. And that beautiful old wooden desk given to you by your grandmother where your iPad is set up – that's an old treasure. Both together give us access to a kind of rich, full life.

Most commentators believe that the old treasure and the new treasure that Matthew most believed needed to be held together were the tradition that the Hebrew Scriptures represented and the entirely new event that was the coming of Jesus. For Matthew, the Hebrew Scriptures were a collection of treasured stories about God creating the world and redeeming humanity. At the same time, however, the coming of Jesus, God with us in the flesh, was an entirely new expression of the creative and relentless love of God.

As you come to this election today, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, consider these questions: What of your history and heritage, the good and the challenging parts of it, the distant and more recent pieces of it, do you value

and desire to see reflected in the decision that you make today? And along with this, what new things do you believe God through the Holy Spirit may be doing here in this Diocese? What new capacities, pathways, or energies do you see God calling you to be open to? What new needs are here today? How might this awareness of what is new influence your decision today?

Part of the challenge, of course, in speaking about tradition and new insight, treasures old and new, is figuring out what order to use when speaking of these two things. There is, you might say, a logic to that order, for the past comes before the present. And so we like to think that such an order is natural and right.

But please note, that Matthew, reverses that order, perhaps because he believes that new treasures, the treasures of today, cause us to see and draw on what is old in an entirely new way.

“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven,” Jesus tells the disciples, “is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” ■

The Most Reverend Melissa Skelton is the bishop of the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster and the metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of British Columbia and Yukon.

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Reflections on the synod

The episcopal synod, held Sept. 26, was a new experience for the diocese and the delegates. Here are some perspectives from participants around the islands and inlets.

Virtually Together

As I watched the coverage of the diocese's first-ever virtual electoral synod unfold, I was reminded of one of our diocesan slogans: We Together. Ironically, though we had to convene online and apart, we were in some ways more together than ever before: not only the nine screens of synod members in those little "Hollywood Squares" on Zoom, but literally thousands of others watching the live stream from across the diocese and far beyond. That's significantly more people than would ever have been able to witness the proceedings of a "normal" synod, gathered in person in the cathedral.

The two dozen or so dedicated officers, staff, contract personnel, and volunteers who were physically present to oversee the proceedings, support the presiding archbishop, manage the voting process (in liaison with our off-site electronic voting service provider), and produce the broadcast coverage felt palpably that we were connected with a great "cloud of witnesses" – if in this case through Zoom chat, text messages and the like. It was a blessing that thanks to technology, the cathedral was able to play its role as a focal point of diocesan life in a new way.

There were some tense moments, as well as some stretches of longueur, but by and large, everything seemed to go fairly smoothly. We appreciate all the feedback we received – including constructive criticism – and we will learn from the experience for next time. As with so many aspects of church life, it seems likely that the future, even after we are able to come together physically again, will be a hybrid of actual and virtual experiences. —Canon Ian Alexander led the team responsible for the physical and technical aspects of the recent online electoral synod.

Meeting from home

This was my first experience as a synod delegate and from what I gather, it was not at all a typical experience because of COVID-19. It was very rewarding, and I was very honoured to be part of the process of choosing our next bishop. I think there were two unexpected benefits to the new format. The first was the opportunity we had to have conversations with other delegates in our online "breakout rooms." After each ballot, we were given the opportunity to join a chat with a few other delegates. This gave us a chance to meet and talk with many people from different parts of the diocese whom we might never have met otherwise. The second may seem a bit strange, but I was happy to be able to sit in my own environment, in a comfortable chair, near the coffee pot and refrigerator! This was particularly helpful given the length of the synod. All in all, it was a wonderful experience.

—Sue Simpson is a delegate for Christ Church Cathedral

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Doomsayers take note

Leading up to the electoral synod, I heard a sentiment widely expressed across the diocese from lay delegates, clergy and people in the pews about our slate of candidates for bishop. That sentiment could be summed up as "I would be happy to have my last choice as my bishop." What an extraordinary group of deeply faithful and talented people we were offered! Doomsayers about the future of the church must have been badly knocked off balance when such stellar people came forward ready to take on the ministry and mission and burden of being our bishop.

Doomsayers, had they been watching, would have received another knockout blow seeing over 160 people from right across the islands and inlets come together to pray and discern whom God was calling to lead us, all at a time of pandemic when being together could only happen in the "ether" and not in the flesh. The archbishop, in her sermon, spoke of the Anglican way of holding things in balance. Among those things in balance are tradition and new ways of working. Electoral Synod 2020 was a prime example. We could not gather as electoral synods have gathered throughout the history of the church, but we used the tools of our time to be faithful to our canons, our traditions, and our mission.

For those of us born after the war, the pandemic is the greatest collective challenge we have faced. But even in the face of that challenge, we go on as the church. Across the diocese the work of the church continues, albeit in very different ways. In 2018 at the last diocesan synod, the Anglicans of the Islands and Inlets committed to the Transforming Futures campaign. Elements of the campaign have had to be put on hold during the pandemic, but we have not stopped transforming the future. Who should have imagined last January the rapid transformation of our ways of worshipping, working and praying in a matter of a few weeks? Electoral Synod 2020 was a magnificent expression of our capacity, with the grace of God, to transform our futures building upon that which was good about our pasts.

—Walter Stewart is volunteer lay co-chair of Transforming Futures

More interesting than watching paint dry

The diocesan website stated with confidence that observing the election for the next bishop of the diocese "would be more interesting than watching paint dry." It was certainly that, but any paint I have ever worked with dried in less than half the time!

It took seven ballots. As one of those who sat at home in front of my computer for six and a half hours, I give high marks to the synod office and its staff for organizing and pulling off a highly complex process



Synod delegates from Lantzville, Nanaimo and Nanoose Bay gathered at St Philip by the Sea, Lantzville, to watch the livestreamed service from Christ Church Cathedral. Photo by David Chillman.

involving 164 individuals. Given that the majority of those participating were of generations whose fingers were more comfortable holding a pen than typing on a keyboard, we all did a magnificent job.

Also of high quality was the detailed information available on each candidate. Accompanying videos gave us a glimpse of their personality. Information on their education and career experience, along with extensive replies to penetrating questions highly relevant to this diocese, made clear what each would bring to the task.

The beauty of the cathedral, the dignity of the service that preceded it, the gracious presence of Archbishop Melissa Skelton who presided, set the stage for this turning-point event. The number of candidates prepared to take on this challenge and the strengths that each brought to the task, as well as their demonstrated deep commitment to the church, combined to make this an event of great joy and confidence.

Either of these final two candidates would have made an outstanding spiritual leader for this diocese. But, from my perspective, the laity, heavily weighted to an older and perhaps more conservative generation, was surprisingly prepared

for risk. They clearly favoured the lesser-known candidate and the one who perhaps most strongly pointed to the necessity of the church being out of its buildings and into the streets of the world, shaping the Gospel to ears deaf to traditional ways of expressing it.

—Tony Reynolds is a synod delegate for St. Peter, Comox.

Given that the majority of those participating were of generations whose fingers were more comfortable holding a pen than typing on a keyboard, we all did a magnificent job.

Zooming through

Our local delegates met to celebrate the eucharist. Afterward, we retreated to our home offices (my bedroom, in my case) to join synod on Zoom. I felt confident about voting. I spend a lot of time on Zoom, so the technology isn't scary, and I have taken part in synod before. Easy-peasy, right?

Wrong. This time, Zoom wouldn't let me in. The usual sign appeared, advising

me to click on the prompt when it came up - but it didn't come up. As time went by, and I realized trying the same fix over again didn't work (duh!), I became frantic. Finally, I restarted my laptop. That worked. I was in.

It took a couple of ballots before I really started to doubt myself. I had studied the candidates' CVs and watched their videos. I had prayed. But I hadn't appreciated the psychological benefit of being in a room full of people with a common purpose until that 'room' was a laptop. I was alone. Those 164 other people were just faces on a screen.

I felt inadequate and exhausted. Fortunately, Zoom meetings do allow you to lie down between votes, so I did. Whenever the background music stopped, I would go to my chair and vote. The procedure took hours, and it felt like weeks, but suddenly it was over. We had—we have—a bishop. Suddenly those 164 faces were real people, and we had done this momentous thing together.

And I didn't have to drive home! ■

—Sandra Leigh is a parishioner and deputy rector's warden at St Paul, Nanaimo.

Behind the scenes





Page 6 clockwise from top left: Mike Walker of Roll Focus Productions and Cathedral parishioner Mark Thompson manage the live video feed; Brendon Neilson, diocesan vision animator, acts as Zoom host for delegates; Barry Foster (executive archdeacon) and Melissa Skelton (archbishop); executive assistant Tara Saracuse helps coordinate ballots and the Zoom chat; communications director Catherine Pate and registrar Nathan Lampard; Ian Alexander led the livestream production team.

Page 7: Paul Schumacher (clerical secretary) and Elaine Ellison (lay secretary); Robert Gill (chancellor) and Melissa Skelton (archbishop) prepare for the broadcast; Cathedral warden and hand sanitizing sentinel Michael Wolff; Marilyn Dalzell manages the sound tech; Mark McDonald (cathedral assistant director of music) performs dual roles as organist for the eucharist service and member of the synod livestream production team. Photos by Susan Down.

First woman bishop

Continued from cover

justice projects such as chairing the Calgary Alliance for the Common Good, and she has learned to apply change management theories from the business world to congregational development. Currently, she is halfway through her master of business administration degree, studying the distance education program at Athabasca University.

The church has to be willing to address the systemic racism in our society, says Greenwood-Lee, who supports the diocese’s reconciliation work. She is involved with elders and other community members in a campaign to get the Calgary Police to increase the number of Aboriginal liaison officers, saying Indigenous people there are “overpoliced and underprotected.”

Addressing the synod via livestream video from her home in Calgary following the seventh and deciding ballot, Greenwood-Lee said she was a bit surprised at being chosen from among what she called a remarkable group, and she has long admired the work of Bishop Logan. She referenced both her age and outsider status in her remarks. “You took a certain amount of risk electing me,” she said. “I look forward to being in your midst and building relationships

of trust.” She said Victoria has a special place in her heart, making note of the painting of the wrecked schooner Robertson II hanging behind her as she spoke. She and her husband met as teenagers during a summer sailing trip on the vessel run by the Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS) out of Victoria. She returned to be a volunteer crewmember on the ship, originally built as a Grand Banks fishing schooner (SALTS sold the ship which was later wrecked on a reef near Saturna Island in 2007). “My husband calls it ‘Our marriage on the rocks,’” she joked of the painting.

Finally, she said that her namesake, Anna, was a longtime prophet in the Temple and she wanted to reassure people that she wouldn’t stay as long, stating her belief that senior leadership needs to be renewed after 10 to 15 years.

The day after the election, the news was still sinking in for the bishop-elect, who said she is grateful for all the messages of support. She was nominated by Barry Foster, now the diocesan executive archdeacon in Victoria, whom she first met years ago while working for an Anglican parish in Banff in 1998. “He talked me into being ordained,” she said. So when he called again to say he thought her skills would be a good fit for the diocese, she listened.

Born in the UK (Leeds), she came to Canada with her family at the age of two and grew up

in Edmonton. She earned an honours bachelor of arts degree in religious studies at New Brunswick’s Mount Allison University. She later pursued her education in Massachusetts where she earned a master’s degree in divinity from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, and her clinical pastoral education at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston.

In two decades in the church, she has seen misogynistic attitudes fade. When she was first ordained, some Calgary colleagues told her they didn’t believe in women priests. “I used to be mad about it and now I just laugh when people want to put me in the same category as the tooth fairy,” she said. While serving in a parish in the diocese of Toronto, Greenwood-Lee was encouraged by Ann Tottenham, who was the second woman in Canada to be elected a bishop.

The new bishop-elect is looking forward to lots of listening and relationship building – the only way to effect change, she says. And she will play a pivotal role in the future of the Anglican church in this region. “We need to expand into other ways of inviting people into the Christian life. We need to let go of the idea that our primary goal is going to church and live into our call to be the Church.” ■

Susan Down is editor of the Diocesan Post

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Running an election, Anglican-style

Continued from cover

by just 10 votes. At that point, Chancellor Robert Gill announced that there would only be two more ballots, and if a clear winner was not chosen, then the synod would have to reconvene within 30 days. It did indeed take a full seven ballots to see the clergy votes shift and achieve a full majority (see all the ballot figures on the Anglican Diocese of BC website or Facebook page).

No matter the speed of the technology, democracy in action can still be drawn out. Just like a political leadership convention, the balloting process was

long – more than six hours. Including the opening eucharist, held at Victoria’s Christ Church Cathedral with Archbishop Melissa Skelton presiding, the synod was a day-long event.

Delegate Geoff Strong said Cowichan Valley members of synod met at St. John, Cobble Hill to watch the virtual eucharist before returning home to “attend” the synod. “The “counting” time for each ballot seemed lengthy, given that all votes were tabulated automatically by computer,” he said. “However, these delays allowed for half-hour virtual breakout sessions of 6-8 members after each ballot. Discussions were relaxing and welcomed by all, and everyone respectfully abstained from canvassing for their favorite candidate.”

The 164 delegates were given three online voting rehearsals to make things go smoothly. On Zoom, they could meet in one of 15 virtual breakout rooms. “They were doing exactly what we’d hoped – meeting delegates from across the Island and using the platform to connect,” said diocesan vision animator, Brendon Neilson, who acted as Zoom host on election day. “It allowed the synod to feel as normal as possible.”

Instead of endless TV-style colour commentary, delegates and casual Facebook viewers were treated to images of diverse diocesan activities and recorded music from the Christ Church Cathedral choir. Once the candidate was chosen, the cathedral bells pealed joyfully, and, as one participant noted, no one had a long drive home. ■



Bishop Logan came back from retirement Sept. 20 to preside over the pandemic-delayed ordination of Matthew Humphrey and Gail Rodger. (Marilyn Gough photo)



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Behind the scenes



BY CATHERINE PATE

Wow! I can't say I've done anything quite like that before. September 26, 2020 is a day that will go down in the diocesan history books as the "Pandemic Electoral Synod." Not only was it our first-ever virtual synod, it was made even more complicated because we were electing a bishop. No diocese in the country (maybe the world) had, until then, done an electoral synod quite the way we did: using Zoom to mimic the floor of synod while simultaneously using Simply Voting electronic voting software to cast votes from the comfort of delegates' homes. And it worked! We have a new bishop!

Almost equally important, I think, we discovered that all things are possible, that we have all that we need if we work together, and that grace abounds.

Early in the planning process, our chancellor, Robert Gill, helpfully reminded the planning team that we were not simply trying to provide a way for people to vote,

we were recreating (as best we could) the synod experience in virtual space. In order to do that we needed to be sure that delegates could be assured that the chair and officers of synod were conducting the proceedings in adherence to our canons and regulations, that they would have what they needed in order to cast their vote, that they would be able to raise a point of order or nominate a candidate from the floor (as our canons permit), and that they would be "together" as a synod, praying and discerning our way through the process. This is all difficult to do if you aren't all in a room together. We overcame this hurdle though, with the use of the "rooms," chat and "raise your hand" features in Zoom and the support of two synod staff to provide technical support, allow delegates to talk and pray together, to collect comments and relay them, through returning officers, to the chair, who was physically located at the cathedral with the officers of synod.

The other important component was the ability for our bishop-elect to address the synod once that person's name was announced. With candidates spread literally across the globe, our only option was to 'patch' them into the cathedral live stream using yet another piece of digital software. So many moving parts!

The demographic of our synod is made up predominantly of folks who are not "digital natives" as GenXers are. There were a lot of new skills to learn and a

lot of trust required on the part of our delegates. It is incredible to think how our progressive move online as a diocese over the last few years, and especially these last few months, has equipped us to be willing to even attempt such a monumental event. The trust and confidence were truly inspiring. I could not be prouder of us all.

At the same time, livestreaming provides an opportunity for those who wouldn't normally be able to see what goes on at a synod to be with us, watching the cathedral activity and the ballot results throughout the day, praying right along with us. In this way, we could engage people on our website, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and invite so many more people (almost 9,000 views) from around the world to walk with us on this digital journey.

We will continue to evaluate this synod for months, taking with us into this new episcopacy the knowledge that we attempted it and then did it all together. Thank you!

A special note of thanks to all those involved in bringing this digital synod together including the episcopal transition team, Ian Alexander and the Christ Church Cathedral production team, Roll. Focus. Productions, Data on the Spot, regional deans and archdeacons and synod office staff. ■

Catherine Pate is the director of communications for the diocese.

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