SYNOD REPORT       May,   2021

As with so many things in this time of pandemic the 181st Synod of the Diocese of Huron was held virtually. The upside of this was the Opening Service was available for everyone in the Diocese.

The service opened with a shortened Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address read by Olive Elm of the Oneida Nation. These greetings to the Natural world are traditionally said at the beginning and end of each day when there is a gathering of the people.

Included in the morning service was the collation of the Venerable Rosalyn Elm as Archdeacon of Indigenous Ministries and Reconciliation. Bishop Townsend said how important it is at this time of Indigenous resurgence to continue to work with Indigenous Anglicans as we partner in new and creative ways to be together in Christ.

The theme of this Synod was “Yielding to the Spirit”. As I share this morning I hope you can see that the Spirit did lead throughout the Synod.

Bishop Todd spoke of the fact that since the last gathering in September people have been trying to hold it together; living their lives as best they could and listening to what God wants us to do. We are both energized and at the same time wiped. Our priests and our laity are tired.

In spite of the tiredness there were some very encouraging reports, mostly in video form. I will share a few of them.

Sadly Camp Huron will not open for campers this summer but it will next. They did a beautiful presentation with photos of campfires, sunsets and campers leaving their footprints in the sand. All of this as we listened to a beautiful camp song written and sung by Rebekah Phibbs. “Sixty days, twelve cabins”. Bishop Todd spoke of the camp being a “thin space”. Plan a visit if you can.

The Primates World Relief and Development Fund raised close to $400,000.00 to continue their important work during the pandemic. St James’ was pleased that we were able to meet our financial commitment.

Bishop Marinez of our Companion Diocese of Amazonia sent a powerful video. I encourage you to watch it on the Diocesan or St. James’ website. With inaction by the politicians she said they experienced a “tsunami” of COVID cases and deaths. She said how ironic it was that in the middle of the Amazon, the place that helps the whole planet to breathe, people suffocated to death. With the ongoing prayers and support of the clergy and people of Huron she said they never felt alone.

The Social and Ecological Justice Huron Committee supported Bishop Townsend and the Bishops across the country with their petition asking for a basic income for all Canadians. That was only one of many actions.

They also presented a motion based on the 5th. Mark of Mission asking Synod to encourage Huron Church House and all the churches in Huron to achieve the minimum green standard by 2022. Although there are some differences we achieved both light and medium green standards in 2016. We will continue to care for Creation at St. James”.

A relatively new but timely Committee, the Proud Anglicans of Huron presented a video. They are a diverse group of clergy and lay individuals who are passionate about facilitating conversations and providing resources on the topic of gender and sexuality within the Anglican faith. They affirm, celebrate and love each child of God as they were created to be.

During the Sunday session the Bishop in his Charge reminded us that the post war church of the 50s and 60s, when there was a strong desire for stability and peace; what we thought of as the “Golden Age” of the Church was not “normal” but was an anomaly, a blip on the long time line of the church.

We do not live in a stable post war society now; the world has changed and our environment has changed. Some leaders from past years are feeling a sense of despair and failure as churches close and there is what is perceived as a decline of the church. But they have not failed. They have left an amazing legacy and we are the inheritors of that.

And today’s leaders are not failing. They, with us are living in a time where something is ending and something is beginning. We were reminded we have the gift of resources the most important being people. wonderful people. As a Diocese we are not starting from scratch. We have people and we have buildings and we are being lead by the Holy Spirit. Our buildings may change but we have our Anglican practices, our Anglican traditions and that is all we need right now.

At last September’s Synod Bishop Townsend suggested four priorities we should consider as a guide as we move forward together.

A Learning Church.
A disciple is a student of Jesus. Our Bishop said we in Huron have proven we are eager to learn. There have been study groups, workshops, speaker’s series, podcasts and much, much more. Many of us have embraced digital media which has made participation easier.
He said of the future, “ Stay curious about Christ friends, there will be more content and more opportunities to be a learning church.”

A Just Church
A just church lives in right relationship with God, one another and the natural creation. Bishop Todd spoke of the work already being done in many churches to learn more about racism, reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, Creation Care, refugee sponsorship, addressing economic injustices and so on. He thanked the committees who have worked to further these objectives.
Once we are free of the restrictions of the pandemic he says “our eyes cannot veer from the two things that threaten us more than this corona virus: inequality and environmental degradation.”

A Diverse church
At this time in many places we do not see a diverse church. It is mostly just the demographic reality of where we live but that will change. The future of Canada is going to be multi traditional, multi cultural, multi linguist, multi racial, multi gendered and so also needs to be the Anglican Church. Maybe, the Bishop said, “unity in diversity” will become our motto.

A New Church
“In a liminal season we ready ourselves for new beginnings. For those who love the idea of everything becoming new , this is fun. For those who dread it and are concerned for what will be lost this is not fun.”
Bishop Todd said that

 “the “new” he refers to is “the deepest, truest, form of “new” possible. The kind that is good news for all. It is the kind of new we hear described in the creation stories. It is the kind of new that was experienced at the empty tomb of Jesus. Sheer possibility. That is what our church is built upon. Faith in the possibility of a new creation, a new creation that is stretching out before us and that the Holy Spirit of God promises to lead us into. The whole history of the people of God has included liming times like this. God always led them through - each and every time - to the new thing promised.”

Reverend Lorne, Reverend Tom, Karen Haslam, Kyle and I did have an opportunity to share briefly and virtually following Synod. One thing we all felt was an ongoing theme was how important prayer has been through these last long, challenging months.

Our Bishop said, “ One person praying sincerely can change a room”. Let us continue to pray as we move forward together.

P.S.
I encourage you to visit the Diocesan website recently designed and updated by Kyle Gascho. There you can listen to or read the two parts of the Bishop’s Charge, his Sermon from the Opening Service, Bishop Marinez’ video. A Faith Statement given by Peter Andersen is a “ must see”. And much, much more.
Go to:          [diohuron.org](http://diohuron.org).      and click on “media”.

Thank you for the opportunity to be a Lay Delegate from St. James’. It has been a learning and reaffirming opportunity.

Lori C.