



## **BISHOP'S OFFICE**

### **DIOCESE OF CALEDONIA**

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## **BISHOP'S CHARGE – 60<sup>TH</sup> SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF CALEDONIA**

10 September 2021

In the name of God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

This is not how I had envisioned my first Synod as your Bishop. After hoping and rescheduling for the past 16 months, we are moving forward with this hybrid Synod. Over this pandemic we have become more comfortable with the digital world and ministry in it. Thank you for being flexible, honest, and willing to engage in this way.

For the past 4 years, as I have journeyed with the Diocese, you have been in my daily prayers. The Holy Spirit has been encouraging and sustaining the ministry in the Diocese and building up many faithful followers of Jesus Christ. As I have come to know the Diocese and each of you, I am proud of the ministry that is happening here. Many we continue to grow and be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus.

The theme for Synod is "Pruning and Planting" based on 1 Corinthians 3:9: "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building." St. Paul gave us an incredible image of how we add to the labours of others as we minister in God's fields. One ploughs, another plants, and another waters; all to the glory of God. Throughout my ministry, I have felt blessed to add my chapter to the history of a parish or diocese, but this image of pruning and planting excites me.

I am aware that I am mismatching metaphors. I beg your indulgence. We are God's field, and we are the laborers in the world. Both, at the same time. When non-churchgoers look at a congregation, they sometimes expect a building of saints. It's a hard expectation to live up to. That's why we are God's field. We are works in progress. We are also called to work this transformation out, while engaged in ministry. We are God's hands at work

in this broken world. Doing the work of the saints, though not a saint yet. (Some days, I feel it is like trying to swap tires on a moving vehicle.). But this is the life we are called to live. We are working with each other in our families, community, congregations, and the Diocese. This work is based on faithful people of the past's efforts and a heritage we will entrust to a future generation. For the moment, please look at this work as

If we focus on a field of trees, or in other words an orchard, the metaphors become clearer. (For me, at least.) This is where the image of Pruning and Planting holds special place. For we are now in an orchard that was planted by our elders and ancestors. It has produced much fruit, which we acknowledge and celebrate. As the orchard has grown, there is need for pruning and new planting.

God prunes us in our personal and corporate lives. The Holy Spirit convicts and guides us into paths of holiness and righteousness. Confession is an important part of our pruning. By opening to God can bring healing and growth. This is not always easy or comfortable experiences, but then, as we read in Scripture and in Michael Volland's book, *The Orchard*, new growth happens after pruning.

God plants new growth in our lives. Confession allows us to experience forgiveness. Being a forgiven and forgiving people is deeply transformative and empowering. It is what makes the Christian faith difficult and so beautiful. Henri Nouwen wrote of being a "wounded healer." For him our strengthen and ministry came out of the areas that needed forgiveness – given and received.

The Anglican Communion has described discipleship as a Jesus Shaped Life. This is a great definition as our lives are shaped by His love, teaching, and leading. We are shaped as we reflect on His word and pray. The Holy Spirit then produces change and growth. Bishop Nick Drayson of Northern Argentina said, "If you make disciples you will always get the church. But, if you try to make the church, you will rarely get disciples." This is part of the Pruning that we continue to experience today.

We as a Diocese has experienced some Pruning over the past several years. This includes moving the Synod Office from Terrace back to Prince Rupert. This was only possible as we owned the space where the office is and the incredible kindness of Dean Paul Williams. His generous sharing of the Deanery has allowed the Diocese to save nearly \$30,000 this past year.

The Pruning has continued with the end of several ministries in the Diocese. It was with a heavy heart that I accepted Canon Gary Davis's resignation. The side effect of CoVid meant that he needed to retire. I am thankful for his

ministry in New Aiyansh and the Diocese. Financial pressures have left several parishes vacant. This Pruning begs future conversation about the nature of ministry and the role of bi-vocational ministry.

There are several examples of bi-vocation ministry in the Diocese. Port Edward is faithfully served by the Reverends Anthony Adams and Yvonne Hill. This may be our reality moving forward, especially in the smaller communities. The cost of the full-time cleric is approximately \$75,000 per year and would require a congregation of 60 regular attenders to support this model of ministry. Not an impossibility, but an option worthy of exploration. Over the next several years this is going to be one of the areas that the Executive will be working. What models of ministry will be pursued in Caledonia?

Dovetailing on this work is a refresh of our Canons and Policies. Four years ago, every Diocese and Province in the Anglican Church of Canada reviewed and updated their episcopal electoral canons. This was a positive side-effect of the failed election in Caledonia. We too need to do the same work, and more. While this is not the fun and exciting work of the church, it is important. More importantly, our governance needs to reflect our reality. One motion coming before this Synod addresses this matter of governance. The Executive passed a motion that removes the structure of lay synod delegates and grants every congregation one member. There will be time for this conversation tomorrow.

Planting seems more life affirming. There has been some incredible Planting happening in the life of the congregations and Diocese. Some of this can be seen in new initiatives such as the Armatus Safe Church Training Program that equips and informs those in ministry within the Diocese in the signs and steps for creating a safe space for ministry. Our partnership with On Eagles Wings has gifted us with Sunday School curriculum, Summer Bible School programs, and programing for Camp Caledonia. We have engaged in conversations about hospitality and invitation to worship, Messy Church, and Lay Reader training.

In response to the Calls of Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Diocese, as a member of the Anglican Church of Canada, has initiated Territorial Acknowledgements prior to worship and meetings. This is a Planting that comes with pain and resentment. We are a people committed to reconciliation, that's what we say each time we pray the Lord's Prayer. Some push back has been that this is a political statement and as such has no place in the church. But not making the Acknowledgement is also a political statement. In either case, it is a spiritual statement. Ultimately for me, this is the least that we can do as step in reconciliation. When traveling to Ireland, Scotland, or the Holy Land, the land is

acknowledged – the homes of the McGees, Douglas's and Stewarts, and Judah are expected. We can do this simple act of respect for the ancestors that were here before us too.

To further this work and in recognition of their commitment to their congregation, culture, and the Diocese, the Reverend Lily Bell, the Reverend Thelma Hill, and the Reverend Harry Moore are now named Canons of the Diocese and this Cathedral. Each of you has shown dedication to Christ and his Church during what has been difficult times. Your exemplary witness and dedicated service are most appreciated. Thank you and congratulations.

The other major Planting in the Diocese is starting the process of Mission Action Plans. 5 parishes across the Diocese engaged in the first wave of this planning. They worked hard to describe what their community, congregation, and ministry goals for the next three years. Tomorrow 2 of the parishes will share their journey and their Mission Action Plans. This is a tool for congregational development. Proverbs 28:18 tell says, "Where there is no vision, people are discouraged." MAPs cast a vision that is grounded Christ and rooted in the needs of the community. 5 other parishes will participate in the process next winter.

To extend the mix-matching of metaphors, all this work is like eating a buffalo – it can be overwhelming but is accomplished one bite at a time. As I reflect on God's faithfulness over this past 142 years in the life of the Diocese, I know that He will continue to lead and bless us as He serve Him in His world.

The work before us is not easy. The world we live in is in the post-modern era. This includes other "post" elements including colonialism. While this is not always a comfortable space, it is a blessing to be grounded in faith and strengthened to serve. There is no doubt in my mind that with God shepherding us, we will add to his orchard and see beauty in the lives of those around us.

Respectfully in Christ,



The Right Reverend David TJ Lehmann,  
Bishop