

SUMMARY OF THE 146<sup>TH</sup> SYNOD OF THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ONTARIO,  
MAY 8 TO 10, 2025:  
COMMUNITIES OF HOPE, DISRUPTIVE GRACE

The gathering of Synod began on Thursday evening at St. George's Cathedral. During the service of Holy Eucharist Bishop William Cliff offered his charge to Synod.

Bishop William reflected on the passages from Acts 3:1-10 and Isaiah 30:15-21, noting their, and our, inclination to focus on loss and lament, rather than looking forward in faith. He called us to "begin to pray, plan and pursue the vision of the Kingdom that the church must face right now." As God did with the people Isaiah spoke to, God is trying to get us to see a new way forward. This new way will not be found through reliance on any of our resources, tools or technology, but in reclaiming a "fearlessness and willingness to go further to see that the news of the liberating love of Jesus was available to the known world. This is the energy with which we need to be infused." The great gift that we have to offer the world today is still Jesus Christ.

He stated that "the central message of the church is the healing, reconciling, disrupting, transforming and irresistible grace of Jesus Christ. All the other factors in our corporate life must take a back seat to this singular transforming and disrupting presence of Jesus in our midst," and that we need to be prepared for the disruption that will result from the grace of our Lord changing the lives of those who have been healed and who then join us in rejoicing.

He reflected on the Archbishop of York's description of the Holy Spirit's 'preferred pattern' of starting small and nurturing growth through the attractive power of hope and the joy that accompanies hope - joy that is "the central engine of the work of the Holy Spirit in the

Church," and which we see demonstrated in the stories of outreach shared weekly in our eNews.

He charged Synod that, for the next two to three years, the Diocese is to think long and hard about three interlocking matters in our common life:

1. The Mission of being communities of hope - letting the Holy Spirit disrupt our congregational life while at the same time looking outwards for new ways to serve;
2. Formation of hopeful leaders who inspire joy - discerning and training new lay and ordained leaders, including an expanded diaconate, who are equipped joyfully and hopefully to lead us into the future; and
3. A transformation in the business of being church - lifting the burden of administration, restoring joy in membership, and sharing more broadly in the tasks of parish life.

Bishop William awarded the Diocesan Award of Merit to Ms. Audrey Doliszney and The Ven. Bill Clarke. He named The Revd Margaret Johnson-Jones as Canon Pastor in the seat of St. Margaret of Scotland, The Revd Mike Michielin as Canon Theologian in the seat of St Augustine, and The Revd Lisa BrantFrancis as Canon of the Chapter of St. George in the seat of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. He offered thanks and blessings to The Revd Rod BrantFrancis as he begins Episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Moosonee, and thanked the Ven. David Selzer for his service, while also welcoming the Ven. Jane Humphreys as Executive Archdeacon. He offered his thanks to the Diocesan Office Staff and extended his thanks to everyone in the Diocese for the privilege to serve.

During the liturgy the award recipients were presented with their medals and those named to offices were installed.

Friday began with prayer and the Gospel of the day.

Motions were passed electing the honorary secretaries and affirming loyalty to the King, and Synod was called to order, the honorary secretaries having declared quorum.

A motion was passed approving the agenda, extending courtesies of the house, approving the minutes of Synod 2023, making appointments to Diocesan Court, and accepting all reports.

Table groups held discussion in response to the Bishop's charge based upon the following three questions:

1. What needs to be disrupted in my own spiritual life? How do I ask God what needs to change in me? Where is Sin, System or Separation keeping me from being a more faithful disciple?
2. What needs to be disrupted in our parish? What can we pray for the Lord to do in our midst? Where is Sin, System or Separation keeping us from making more disciples?
3. What needs to be disrupted in our surrounding community? Where has Sin, System or Separation broken the children of God and how do we disrupt it and bring healing?

Dr. Scott Brubacher gave a presentation about the Anglican Foundation of Canada. AFC has disbursed over \$42 million supporting Diverse Infrastructure, Leadership & Education, Community Ministries, Indigenous Ministries, and Sacred Music & Liturgical Arts. He highlighted funding in our own diocese and drew attention to 'Say Yes! to Kids' and the many youth initiatives supported through this fund. He encouraged us to support the four 'Say Yes! to Kids' projects in the Diocese of Ontario.

The Foundation seeks to be a strategic partner in the future of the church, which is particularly expressed in the current request for Community Outreach proposals. Legacy funding will be a 2025 initiative. He offered special thanks to Canon Bob Wright for keeping AFC vibrant in our Diocese.

A moment of silence was kept in honour of this anniversary of VE Day.

The following members were added to those letting their names stand for Synod Council:  
Hastings Deanery - Major the Revd Canon Don Aitchison;  
Quinte Deanery - Ms. Helen Cluett.

Mx. Kaleena Hanoski spoke on behalf of the Parish of Tyendinaga. She/they drew attention to the longer version of our Synod slogan which speaks of walking a GOOD path together. The Kentè:ke community is rooted in faith and trust in Creator, a reality which was tragically damaged by colonization, but through which process the people recognized that the Gospel message brought by colonizers was very similar to the peoples' long-standing beliefs.

The 'Why' of the parish ministry is rooted in Jesus Great Commandment. The parish is in a place where the entire narrative needs to be redefined by going back to basics, learning from Indigenous concepts of narrative and cycle. They are at work decolonizing their church through reconcili-action. Key areas a Language Learning, honouring Cultural Teachings, and Community Building.

The 'How' of the process starts with a core group, asking and honestly answering hard questions and meeting demonstrated needs. The hope that we have to offer is central, hope founded in relationship with God and with each other. Through the process they have undertaken, they are experiencing a new way of being church that meets people where they are and offers opportunity to change the narrative of conflict to one of reconciliation.

She/they concluded the presentation by asking what our communities are doing to become communities of hope and to bring disruptive grace to this world - what is our path? If it is not working we need to forge a new path, trusting in God's guidance as we walk.

In keeping with the Friday tradition of our Diocese, members joined in the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation.

Community Engagement Coordinator Mr. Russ Grant offered a response to the Bishop's Charge, thanking him for his forward looking message.

Reflecting on the discussion questions, Russ noted expressions of fear of change and different levels of readiness, as well as people feeling overwhelmed by the state of the world.

Feedback included that we need to stop expecting God to save our failing church and be more joyful, to stop doing church and be church. Our focus on finance and administration keeps us from needful focus on prayer and fellowship. We need to promote personal relationships and get out into our communities. We need to just try without fear of making mistakes. In our communities, we are called to 'love others until they ask why' and let our actions speak. We need to change the notion of church as social club while creating partnerships with diverse others in our community. We need to pray and remember to let ourselves shine as we learn from our experiences. We are grateful for the Bishop's reminder to keep the joy in our service out in our communities. Russ offered thanks for the Bishop's leadership and inspiration and said that we are ready to accept the challenge of his Charge.

The Rt. Revd Rosemarie Mallett, Bishop of Croydon, began by stating that it's not possible to understand Christian life without grace. That free gift of God invites us to be outward signs, even in our brokenness, of that grace conferred on us. She has experienced, as a black woman, disenfranchisement that has impeded her ability to see God's grace at work in herself. Such systems are entirely contrary to Christian life, wherein we recognize that we are all made in the image of God and in need of grace. God's grace and word have been given to us and are what we have to offer. The Bible is the story of God's disruptive grace at work, even when it's uncomfortable to the status quo. Her three addresses will speak to three qualities of grace seen in scripture.

Although we now see disruptive, manipulative, exploitive, self-interested leadership in the world that is sinful, disruption is necessary to challenge our complacency. Grace confronts the parts of our lives in opposition to God's will and leads to new ways of living. We must see ourselves, as leaders of the church, as disruptors. People in the world are being led by the Spirit to ask questions about the world and their lives - are we ready for them?

The examples of God's disruptive grace in scripture will each highlight two essential qualities we need - vulnerability and humility.

Elijah 19:1-19 begins with fear and flight, continues through being disturbed by God, and ends in renewed missional zeal. Elijah, sent to people who have settled into systems contrary to God's way, has brought wrath upon himself by his proclamation. Feeling hopeless in the wilderness, he is angry and contends with God, but God feeds him and urges him on to Horeb. His self-pity is vulnerable, but not humble, and not forward looking. Finally God is revealed in silence. God deals with Elijah, and with us, on the basis of grace, correcting, restoring and recommissioning Elijah and reminding him that he's not alone. He's sent back to his ministry, having been disrupted for his own sake and the sake of others. Elijah's blindspot was his pride, which stopped him seeing God at work. God puts him back together with renewed purpose, set free by grace. As we see the calamities around us, we must not give in to fear, but trust that God is with us, upsetting expectations. God's disruptive grace and word are dynamic instruments of renewal and we are to be the agents. God will meet us wherever we may be and provide, not just for now, but for the future as well. So what are we doing here? Where are we too proud to see God at work? What mantle do we need to offer to those yet to come?

Bishop Rosemarie concluded with a 'Reverse prayer of St. Francis' which begins 'Lord, make us channels of disturbance . . .'

The Revd Scott Gunn spoke about the roots of Forward Movement in the post depression world of the Episcopal Church, not just 'holding the line,' but seeking 'forward movement' to reinvigorate the life of the church. The founder noted that strong church requires strong congregations with, not just habitual Christians, but disciples. Their mission is now to inspire disciples and equip evangelists. Forward Day by Day is one offering, available in many formats. Courses include 'Transforming Questions' and 'Walk in Love' both of which have a Canadian version. Renewal Works for congregations is another resource - it has revealed that spiritual health can be compared to physical health with the 3 pillars of spiritual life being daily prayer, reading scripture regularly, and deeply engaging in local church community.

He noted that many struggle with believing in God's unconditional love, perhaps in part because we live in a transactional culture or because we're too often taught that it's up to us to fix the world rather than that the world is saved by Christ and we're called to participate.

Forward Movement is looking at ways to better serve the Canadian Church and welcome our input.

The report of scrutineers was presented by The Ven. Bram Pearce. All nominees were acclaimed for Synod Council:

The Ven, Bill Clarke, The Revd Canon Sharon Dunlop (Frontenac)

The Ven, Dr. Bram Pearce (Quinte)

The Revd John Lavelle (Leeds-Grenville)

Those who were elected as Delegates to General Synod are:

Ms. Jane Kirkpatric, Ms. Dawn Tate and Ms. Aveleigh Kyle (Lay)

The Ven Dr. Bram Pearce, The Rev Canon Michael Read and The Very Reverend Douglas Michael (Clergy)

A motion to destroy the ballots was carried.

The Diocesan Financial Officer, Mr. Alex Pierson, made a presentation on resourcing through the lens of Finance.

He directed members to the balance sheet and operating fund. In the trend for the operating fund, income from CMM (Common Ministry and Mission) has decreased while other sources to replace it are being sought. The 2025 budget projected a \$49,000 deficit, significantly down from previous years, which deficit has now been eliminated. Receivables from parishes has trended up. Loans to parishes in financial difficulty have been very helpful in supporting our common ministry. New fees for services now divert some costs from CMM.

Regarding the Investment Fund, including Cemetery Trusts, approximately \$23.7 million (market value) is held, with approximately \$17.3 million of that held for parishes and cemeteries. The investment policy is available, including the recent presentation on the topic.

Cemeteries are being more carefully scrutinized by the provincial government and there is increasing push for compliance. In response to the government mandate for each cemetery to have its own trust account our Ecclesiastical Province and Diocese are working to have regulations adjusted to better match our realities.

Looking forward, we remain heavily dependent on congregational offerings. A 3 Year Framework includes some new areas of income and efforts to consolidate to drive efficiency. We are asset rich (buildings) but cash poor, and our buildings can consume much cash in maintenance and repairs.

He said that the business of being the church indicates that we need new income sources, that we need to look at cost management, and that sustainable programs and partnerships are part of our journey forward.

National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper began his reflection on our Synod speaking about how we use words and the power of what we say. With great humour and profound insight, he described how words affect our seeing, our acting, our perception. Sharing from the day's Gospel from the First Nations Version, he spoke about what we're called to be as people of faith, with the Gospel at the centre. The Anglican Council of Indigenous People models this literally. The challenge is for that Gospel to become a living part at the centre of all we do. Returning to his first theme, he drew attention to the power of words, especially in our spiritual life, saying that a disciple is one who sits and learns, an apostle is then sent out. When are we going to be apostles, going out?

He shared that Sacred Circle has decided to meet after General Synod and will be working 'beyond the paperwork,' the documents that were agreed upon at Sacred Circle 2023 among the many diverse Indigenous communities. The focus is now on how to live into them as Indigenous people within the Anglican Church, including governance and liturgy. He commended the reconciliation work happening in our Diocese. He lamented the growing tendency to neglect Land Acknowledgement as we gather and asked us to really reflect on its meaning and what it calls us to. He expressed gratitude for this Diocese's support which enabled last year's 'Sacred Beginnings' for Indigenous Youth. There is a whole generation of Indigenous Youth who need to know reconciliation and reconcili-action. We are at a crossroad that invites each of us to bring our own gifts to offer for the future. We must know how special and loved we are and not forget that we are family, in this together.

Before the day ended, Synod Council, both new and continuing members, were invited forward and welcomed.

On Saturday Bishop William gathered us with an inspiring quote from Pope Leo XIV speaking to the need for our Holy Spirit led action in the world today for those most in need.

Bishop Rosemarie's second presentation began with a reminder that we must hold on to the hope that is our Lord, Jesus Christ, enabling us to look forward. The New Testament is filled with Jesus challenging norms and redefining true justice. His mission was inherently disruptive. He not only preached, but lived reconcili-action, the Kingdom of God for everyone. Jesus deliberately spent time with outcasts and challenged purity codes, disrupting boundaries that exclude.

The story of Bartimaeus opens with him desperate to disrupt his 'normal' as a blind man, socially, economically and civically excluded. He does, however, have a voice, and calls out loudly and persistently for mercy. He is named and has knowledge to call on Jesus by name as Son of David, but many who are disabled are often perceived as non-entities. He flings his security aside for a new beginning. Jesus asks 'what do you want me to do for you?' He asks for sight and receives it. Jesus heals, revives, and frees, and Bartimaeus then purposefully casts away his only valuable to follow Jesus. While Jesus' closest disciples show spiritual blindness to the true mission of Jesus, this blind man can see it clearly and becomes a model of true faith and discipleship.

The Bishop asked us to move our focus away from the physical disability and the 'cure' to the act of restoration to the new community of faith - the heart of the story. The 'othered' people who "get it" are in stark contrast to the disciples who often don't.

So many sinful systems continue to exert power. How, here and now, are human rights being taken away without those in power being challenged, sometimes due to our fears? Jesus takes on all the silencing powers and releases us from whatever chains us, and enables us to work for those who are in need. Bartimaeus' real request was for Jesus to change him. Are we ready to throw off our security blankets, be changed and follow Jesus? This Gospel asks us to recognize our blind spots. Who are we not seeing as we seek to maintain the social order? The passage calls us to consider

our humility and vulnerability and open our eyes to the new spiritual and material realities of the Kingdom. Are we willing to be disrupted and liberated from our comfort zones? What do I want Jesus to do for me?

All members had opportunity to participate in three Workshops:

### 1. Disrupting Human Trafficking through Christ's Humble Authority

The Revd John Vanstone has travelled far and wide seeing the scourge of human trafficking and offered his wisdom to help us join the fight against this modern day slavery.

- About setting captives free – fight against demonic power and modern slavery
- Very heavy topic – can be difficult to discuss – caution that some is hard to hear
- Topic addressed at 8 synods ago – significant shift since then
- Dedicated police constables are focused on this project in Kingston
- Multi-billion dollar industry - Darkness within an international web of destruction
- Need to think about 'How is our church taking action to address this problem?'
- Referenced handout – 8 P's Freedom Framework – multi-faceted approach
  - . Prevention – addresses root causes
  - . Protection – safety and restoration of survivors
  - . Prosecution – legal supports
  - . Partnership – collaborating
  - . Policy – create internal and external policies
  - . Participation – equipping organizations
  - . Prayer – intercessory work is foundational
  - . Proof – evidence based practices and research
- We were reminded that we have a moral obligation to respond (Galatians 5:1a) respond.
- 4 constables attended to assist with the presentation – shared stories and facts about what it is and how it works – 'Human Trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, harboring or exercising direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit, typically for sexual exploitation or forced labour.
- Both national and international
- Canadian Stats – most victims are women and girls, most traffickers are men and boys
- Hard to report – trauma similar to being a child soldier – most victims don't see themselves as victims
- Process – lured – look for vulnerable – initially soft contact – grooming and pushing boundaries – build trust in isolation – manipulate and coerce (do for me because I have helped you) – exploit

Participants were given resources and reflection questions/challenges to engage with.

### 2. How to practice evangelism in a post-Christian world

Scott Gunn, the executive director of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church based in Cincinnati, Ohio, offered this workshop.

Scripture:

- Preach the Gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16: 14 – 15)
- Share the hope that is with you (1 Peter 3: 15)
- Make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28: 16- 20)

Evangelism in word:

- Evangelism means proclaim the good news – just like sharing the good news of a great movie, TV show or restaurant

- Love your neighbours! And that includes talking with them – practice in relationships
- Share the Good News that gives you hope and purpose – in opportunities – not coercive or combative
- Pray without ceasing – stop and pray when it fits, you choose, elevator speech ‘What is the hope that is within you?’

Evangelism in deed:

- Be a visible Christian – don’t be afraid to practice/show your faith – welcome strangers, feed the hungry, offer comfort
- Change the world for Christ’s sake – can all experience doubt, ‘share your light’
- Be an ambassador for Jesus Christ – claim our own faith and don’t be a habitual Christian – see the key steps in Nurturing Faith

Nurturing a faith to share:

- Prayer daily – just do it – allow time till it works
- Read the Bible regularly
- Be involved in a local church

Evangelism from the church:

- Have an on-line presence- website, Facebook, post services
- Marketing can be a good tactic – card to neighbours, geo-target ads, welcome new/visitors, ways to connect, signage (parking, entrance, washrooms, etc)
- Offer a gracious, notable welcome to all who enter
- Pastor the community – what are the needs of the community and address
- Help people to know Jesus- it’s not about church it’s about Jesus

Evangelism books and courses:

- Transforming Questions (free from Forward Movement)
- Faithful Questions by Gunn and Shobe (Forward Movement)
- Alpha Course (free!!!)
- Reviving Evangelism: Current Realities that Demand a New Vision for Sharing Faith (Barna)

### 3. St. Luke’s Leeds Has Left The Building

Ms. Angie Kelman, Ms. Susan Thorpe, The Revd Trish Miller and The Revd Canon Nancy MacLeod told participants of the events, the prayer and the consultation process that led up to the parish decision to let go of the former St. Luke’s Lyndhurst Church building and Ministry Centre in 2019 and become a church without a building.

Angie began by telling her story - her four sons being baptized and raised in the community of faith that previously gathered in the building, and who are now able to witness to the community of faith at work in the many aspects of their own daily lives, and who now share themselves in the vital outreach ministries of St. Luke’s Leeds.

Susan and Revd Trish shared some of the statistics - while the congregation faced many of the common signs of what we label as decline, the decision to not let that decline constrict the congregation’s ministry, but instead step boldly away from the ‘security blanket’ of the building and more fully engage in mission has been life changing and invigorating.

The church’s mission is the mission of Christ, as understood in our Anglican Communion: telling the good news, teaching others and each other as believers, tending to the needs of all God’s people, working to transform injustice, and treasuring God’s creation.

From 2018 to 2024 volunteer hours actually dropped from about 10,000 to 7,700, but now those volunteer hours are spread over a large number of gifted folk who engage with joy in mission, instead of a small group of folks who spent a great deal of time maintaining buildings. The 2018 outreach budget of about \$10,000, even then 20% of the parish budget, by 2024 was over \$61,000. The

congregations ability to reach out in service to the local community, and worldwide, has vastly expanded through an ongoing process of Community Engagement, Intentional Listening and healthy year-round Stewardship Commitment.

Revd Nancy invited participants to enter into a process of regular assessment of all assets, including building and money, asking whether they are fully serving our participation in the mission of God in the world today and not relics of the past. To open-handedly and full-heartedly serve God's mission must always be our motivation.

The resources from this workshop will be available at  
<https://stlukesleeds.weebly.com/synod-2025-workshop.html>

Bishop Rosemarie began her third presentation quoting 2nd Corinthians 12:9 “My Grace is sufficient for you.”

While her first presentation asked ‘what are you doing here?’ and the second asked ‘what do you want me to do for you?’ This third is not taken directly from the text but asks ‘what does the Lord require of you?’

The early church were disruptors. Their radical love challenged Roman ethno-social realities. Paul shares an alternate vision of humanity joining all together, governed in peace. Humans continue to construct systems of enslavement. That reality is embodied in Onesimus, the property of Philemon. Onesimus has stolen property and run away, and is now ministering to the free-in-Christ but enchained Roman citizen Paul. Unlike Bartimaeus he does not receive earthly liberation. Paul appeals to Philemon to receive and welcome Onesimus as a brother. Philemon knew as a believe that he was called to a higher standard. God’s grace compels us to extend grace to others. Paul didn’t call into question the structure of slavery, a reality used by some to defend the slave trade. Slavery has always existed, used by those with power. The African slave trade was different in the utter misery it inflicted, and in how it influenced all colonial thought and culture through the racializing of humanity, and the church has colluded in imperialism, colonialism and racialization. As a descendent of slaves, the bishop has internalized the trauma of her ancestors and the racism of her society. Racism is an affront to God. Slavery and racism still scar humanity today, a wound on the body of Christ and it is not just a past story, but our story. There is increasing awareness of how the Church benefited from systems of slavery. Restorative justice begins the process of restoring right relationships. Jesus exemplified how to engage with those other than us, bringing them into belonging.

We are called to disruptive thinking that can turn enemies into friends. Onesimus does not have a voice, but we are called to enable others to speak for themselves.

We need to be a church of Elijah, Bartimaeus and Onesimus, to be a community of hope tapping into disruptive grace, to be both a humbler and a more courageous church. May we love those around us and create communities of hope.

Bishop William offered closing prayer and scripture. Zechariah 4:6 ‘bookends’ Isaiah 30, which we began Synod with: “not by might, nor by strength but by my Spirit, says the Lord.” That is precisely how we’ll do all we’re called to do!

Bishop Rosemarie sent us out with a blessing.

The full resource section for this Synod is available at:  
<https://www.ontario.anglican.ca/synod/synod-2025>