

145th Diocesan Synod – Highlights

SYNOD EUCHARIST

The 145th Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa opened with a Eucharist on the evening of October 23, 2025, at Christ Church Cathedral.

The Rev. Dr. Christopher Brittain, recently appointed as diocesan Canon Theologian, offered the homily. He quoted from Archbishop Shane Parker's charge opening the 2024 Synod. "We must always remember that God is already at work in the world, and our task is to participate in God's work by listening in a new way to the Holy Spirit." He noted that those who heard those words last year were not expecting the change that began when Archbishop Parker was elected to lead the Anglican Church of Canada. We should:

- be prepared to be redirected;
- accept that this is going to be disruptive, so we better talk about this honestly together; and,
- stay rooted during this time in God.

The service included the following installations.

- The Rev. Canon Dr. Jon Martin, Canon of St. James
- The Rev. Dr. Christopher Brittain, Canon of St. Anselm of Canterbury and Canon Theologian
- The Rev. Dr. Sarah Johnson, Honorary Canon of the Diocese
- The Rev. Dr. Thomas Brauer, commissioned as Regional Dean of the Southwest
- The Rev. Dr. Caz Ducros, commissioned as Regional Dean of West Quebec

REPORT FROM GENERAL SYNOD

Diocesan members who had attended the June 2025, 44th General Synod held in London, Ontario offered their reflections about their experiences. They reported that:

- the overall atmosphere at General Synod was one in which people listened respectfully to each other and made efforts to incorporate the views and experiences of others;
- they were shocked by Bishop Shane Parker's name being included in the nominees after the second ballot, and by his subsequent election; and,
- they were awed two days later at his very moving installation as Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and by their being asked to participate in the service.

EPISCOPAL ELECTION UPDATE

Synod received an update on our diocese's episcopal election process leading to the Episcopal Election on February 28, 2026.

Three ad hoc committees, which report to Diocesan Council, have been appointed.

1. Diocesan Profile Committee

- It developed the official profile of our diocese, which is now posted on the Episcopal Election page of the diocesan website.
- This profile is particularly useful for candidates from outside the diocese.

2. Supplementary Nominations Committee

- This committee is tasked with enhancing diversity in the nominee pool, consulting with the House of Bishops.
- It is authorized to nominate up to two nominees, who might not have been considered through the regular diocesan nomination process.

- All nominated through this process must meet the same eligibility criteria as all other nominees.
3. **Episcopal Elections Committee**
- Chaired by the Synod Secretaries.
 - Oversees most administrative tasks for the election, including overseeing nomination forms, formal questions, public meetings etc.
 - Applications will be available in early November 2025 and can be accessed through a portal on the diocesan website. Details on completing this process will be posted there.

Voting members of the Electoral Synod include:

- members of Diocesan Council (who are members at the time of this Diocesan Synod);
- 10 retired clergy (chosen by the retired clergy of the diocese); and,
- members of the 2025 Diocesan Synod, including active clergy, lay parish members (and alternate parish lay members if the regular member cannot attend).

Voting process: Balloting at the Electoral Synod will be conducted by secret ballot, with votes counted by orders (clergy and lay).

Rounds of voting: Ballots are cast in successive rounds until one candidate receives a majority in both orders, thereby becoming Bishop-elect.

Transition and consecration: A **Transition Committee** will be established to support the Bishop-elect in assuming the new role. The **Service of Consecration** is scheduled for **May 9, 2026**.

GREETINGS FROM THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF JERUSALEM

The Very Rev. Richard Sewell, Dean of St. George's College in Jerusalem, sent a video with greetings and thanks for our diocese for their love, prayers and advocacy during these last two years of war and trauma and thanked God for the ceasefire.

UPDATE ON TRIENNIAL CYCLE AND CURRENT PRIORITIES

Synod was given an overview of the way the *Shape of Parish Ministry* Consultations, which began in 2020 and led to a consensus at the 2022 Synod for three proposals. These in turn developed into 11 actions supported at the 2023 Synod, and finally 6 aimed for results at the 2024 Synod.

1. Less reliance on parish revenues to fund the operating budget of our diocese.
2. Diocesan staff will provide increased assistance and support to parish leaders as they manage parish finances, properties, stewardship, communications, HR, and administration
3. Our bishop will provide guidance to parishes facing major changes and will promote and enable innovation and collaboration.
4. Parish leaders will receive more training and learning opportunities.
5. We will have a Learning Commons and a program for Parish Advancement that will include resources, knowledge and practical instruction on all essential aspects of parish ministry.
6. We will learn how to practice contextual mission as we engage with the world and establish new worshipping communities.

The *Evaluation and Priority Setting Task Force* has developed tools and processes for a review of the achievements, challenges, and remaining work of this 2024 -2026 triennium. The task force asked Synod members to submit their ideas and feedback in writing in the second session.

ALL MY RELATIONS EPISCOPAL PANEL

The [All My Relations Panel \(AMR\)](#) drew Synod's attention to the fact that 2025 marks the tenth year since the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* released its final report. AMR Co-chair Kathryn Fournier presented a motion calling on our diocese to renew its commitment to ongoing education to ensure its members learn about our church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families, and communities were necessary. The motion was carried with broad support.

NOMINATIONS

Synod confirmed Arlene Armstrong's election to Diocesan Council. It also elected the Rev. Al Budzin, the Rev. Margo Whittaker, and Meredith Brophy to serve on the *Advisory Panel on Termination of Clerical Appointments*.

CANON AMENDMENTS

Several canonical amendments were passed at the Synod, including:

- a substantial update to the governance of Community Ministries;
- importation of a bylaw that requires church wardens to be 18 years old and in full communion in the vestry in which they intend to serve; and,
- confirm the bishop's authority to determine the jurisdiction of archdeacons, to create deaneries, and to set the terms of licensed lay readers.

BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Several bylaw amendments were passed at the Synod, including:

- a clarification and definition of the collaborative relationships between Archdeacons and Regional Deans;
- a clarification of the roles of Churchwardens and Licensed Lay Readers (making it easier for them to serve in more than one parish);
- a clarification of the responsibilities of Incumbents.
- establishment of rules for creating a Community Ministry and its governance, including a requirement that their budgets be approved by the Property and Finance Committee; and,
- a clarification that parish auditors cannot be members of the corporation.

LEARNING COMMONS

Members of the Education Committee reported on the progress which has been made since Synod 2024 in developing Learning Commons resources, including several in-person training sessions for parish leaders held in several locations in the spring. Online resources are also being made available, including the *Thriving Parish Self-Assessment Tool*, a questionnaire to help parishes decide what areas of parish life to prioritize.

CONTEXTUAL MISSION

The Contextual Mission subcommittee reminded us of the goals envisioned at Synod 2024, that:

- by **2028**, every parish in our diocese will be engaged in a new or renewed contextual mission initiative.
- by the 135th anniversary of our diocese, in **2032**, we will have created **35 new worshipping communities**.

To help us achieve these goals, the subcommittee recommended the following resources:

- certificate in *Missional Leadership* course, offered in partnership with the Center for Missional Leadership in Vancouver, B.C;
- *Reimagining Church* from the Niagara School for Missional Leadership; and,
- a course on John Bowen's book *The Unfolding Gospel* available on the Contextual Mission page of the diocesan website

Some successful contextual ministry initiatives were shared with the synod, including a games night held in Smith's Falls, a popular monthly community gathering held in Manotick, and a lunch program offered in Hawkesbury.

Future Fund grants from our diocese are now available to fund such ventures, and can be applied for through the [Contextual Mission page](#) of the diocesan website.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

The 2024 audited statements were presented, showing that diocesan assets increased to \$155 million from \$139 million in 2023. Parish Proportional Share decreased from about 20% to 12%.

Deficits in the Community Ministries for *Belong Ottawa* and *Centre 105* amounted to about \$700,000 combined. *Belong Ottawa* was able to cover much of its deficit with some reserve funds, but our diocese covered the remainder from our reserves. The situation has been stabilized, and *Belong Ottawa* is now anticipating a small surplus. The deficit at *Centre 105* in Cornwall was smaller, but the program and needs of the community that it serves are growing, so they are looking for new ways to help it break even.

COMMUNITY MINISTRIES UPDATE

A brief overview of the five community ministries was offered: *Belong Ottawa*, *Centre 105*, *Cornerstone Housing for Women*, *The Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre*, and the *Refugee Ministry Office*.

Some changes have been instituted to help place *Belong Ottawa* on a stronger financial footing, including:

- an accurate costing of *Belong Ottawa* operations, which has led to a much more robust funding agreement with the City of Ottawa;
- prioritizing of fundraising and donor development, leading to us already surpassing our fundraising goal for 2025; and,
- the creation of the Hearts of Compassion Fund in support of the Community Ministries

Centre 105's deficit, though smaller, is as concerning. Contributing factors included:

- cost overruns in a capital project to construct showers and washrooms;
- a change in United Way funding that meant a \$30,000 reduction in funding; and,
- an exponential increase in demand for services among the people *Centre 105* serves.

Currently, the City of Cornwall does not provide core funding the way the City of Ottawa does for *Belong Ottawa* and *Cornerstone* but talks with the city council are ongoing.

THE REV. CANON DR. PETER JOHN HOBBS HONOURED

As he looks forward to his retirement in February 2026, Canon Hobbs was thanked for his decades of devoted parish ministry and passionate leadership for the Community Ministries. Synod members offered a standing ovation.

ANGLICAN FOUNDATION OF CANADA

A representative of the [Anglican Foundation of Canada](#) brought news of the foundation's latest initiatives, including:

- a new online application portal;
- new legacy giving resources;
- category C grants of up to \$50,000 for strategic, high-impact projects;
- greater emphasis on funding community ministry projects; and,
- growth of *Say Yes to Kids* – 30 teams raised \$160,000 this year.

ACCESSING ASCENSION HOUSE

Communications and Development highlights:

- sharing stories through digital and print media;
- populating the Learning Commons platform on the diocesan website;
- helping in preparations for the Episcopal Election;
- preparing to host the *Anglican Editors Association* annual conference in May 2026; and,
- launched the *Hearts of Compassion Fund* to raise funds for the Community Ministries.

The directors at Ascension House were introduced and a brief summary of their work was presented. They are available to provide support and advice to the whole diocese and encourage everyone to call when needing help.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

The *Stewardship Resource Hub* provides guidance and expertise to parishes and ministries seeking to improve their financial stewardship. The diocese maintains a partnership with *The Episcopal Network for Stewardship*, which all members of the diocese can access.

NOTICES OF MOTION

A motion urging Synod to adopt the *U.N. Declaration for the Decade for People of African Descent in the Light of the Gospel* and to commend it for use in the life and witness of our Diocese was passed.

A *Motion of Thanks and Support for Archbishop Shane Parker* was passed, assuring him of our constant prayers as he leads as our Primate.

SYNOD REFLECTOR

The Rev. Canon Dr. Sarah Kathleen Johnson, director of Anglican Studies at Saint Paul University, offered three reflections for the 2025 Synod.

The First Reflection - *Feathers as Seeds*

Her first reflection shared insights from a research project that surveyed the ways that Anglican parishes have incorporated ceramic feather sculptures into their worship space and practices and how that reflects on their engagement with efforts toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

The feathers were created for an art exhibit marking Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017, and some were gifted to the diocese to inspire commitments to reconciliation. As part of the research project, Anglicans throughout our diocese were asked about the feathers as symbols, reminders of past harm, responsibility, commitment, signs of welcome and acceptance of Indigenous spirituality, as catalysts and calls to action.

Her research highlighted the feathers' potential as a germinal ritual — a catalyst that can spark action or a seed that can grow.

Second Reflection - *Listening to Young People*

Canon Johnson's second reflection focused on a question that preoccupies many people in parishes across the country — how to attract more young people to attend church. She shared insight from research she did in the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. She identified a problematic transactional approach to mission related to concern about the survival of the institution of the church. "The underlying transactional assumption is that the church must identify the needs of younger people and that meeting these needs will bring them back to the church, which will in turn meet the needs of the church."

Canon Johnson shared some findings from a research project she co-led with Emily Snyder Andrews and Nelson: *Young People in Christian Worship Experiences, Stories, and Values*, an ecumenical study of how teenagers and emerging adults experience Christian worship.

Third Reflection - *What we need is here*

Canon Johnson reflected on the discussions and themes that emerged in them during the Synod. She noted that the church is both bigger and smaller than we often imagine. Its largeness is seen in its rich past and in its global presence. Statistics tell us that there will be more Christians in the world in 2050 than there are today. Yet, in its smallness it also displays a power and grace. As she notes, "all it takes to be the church is a Bible, a meal, two or three people, and a commitment to the realm of God."

She closed by leading Synod members in a song by Amy McCreath: *What We Need Is Here*.