

147th Session of Synod 2026 Highlights

Bishop's Charge – October 22, 2026

The 147th Session of Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa opened with a Choral Eucharist service at Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa on the evening of October 22, 2026.

In her first Charge to Synod, Bishop Kathryn Otley said that after a year of notable change, including an episcopal transition, considering a three-year budget would be premature. This Synod will consider a one-year budget and use the coming year to listen broadly, assess our circumstances, discern priorities, and prepare strategic directions for the next Synod.

This year of listening will focus especially on the following areas:

- Youth ministry
- Indigenous relations, reconciliation and Inuit ministry
- Buildings and property
- Wellness and sustainability - addressing exhaustion among clergy, lay leaders, volunteers and congregations by discerning what is essential, what can be renewed and what can be released. Reimagining parish organization.
- Vocations and formation
- Liturgy

Great Chapters will become places of sustained regional listening, attentive to what the Spirit is saying in each context and asking:

- What is working well?
- Where are the gaps?
- What is no longer working and should be changed or released?
- What new possibilities could we explore?

Commissions and Installations

- The Rev. Dr. Tom Hubschmid was commissioned as Regional Dean of East Ontario.
- The Rev. Canon Dr. Jon Martin was commissioned as Regional Dean of West Ottawa.
- The Rev. Canon Gary van der Meers was commissioned (in absentia) as Regional Dean of Central Ottawa.
- The Ven. Robert Camara was installed as Archdeacon of the Southwest.
- The Ven. Brian Kauk was installed as Archdeacon of Central Ottawa.
- The Rev. Eric Morin was installed to the Cathedral Canonry of Saint Deborah.
- The Rev. Victoria Scott was installed to the Cathedral Canonry of Saint Luke.

Friday, October 23, 2026

Synod meetings began on Friday, October 23, 2026, at the St. Elias Centre in Ottawa with opening prayers. Bishop Kathryn Otley read a letter of greeting from Archbishop Hosam Naoum of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.

Community Ministries

Centre 105: A ministry that offers hot meals, showers, laundry, social support, and connection. In 2025, Centre 105 served close to 21,000 meals.

Refugee Ministry Office: Supports parishes and community groups sponsoring new Canadians. Our two case managers have submitted more than 100 applications in recent years.

The Ottawa Pastoral Counselling Centre: A professional psychotherapy and pastoral counselling service for individuals, couples, and families. In 2025, OPC provided approximately 1,200 counselling sessions, and supported close to 300 subsidized sessions through its counselling support fund.

Cornerstone Housing for Women: Ontario's largest provider of emergency shelter and supportive housing for women and gender diverse people, supporting around 330 people each day and serving 270,000 meals in 2025. The emergency shelter recorded close to 400 critical incidents, including calls to paramedics.

Belong Ottawa: Brings together three programs, The Well, Center 454, and St. Luke's Table. There are more than 80 staff, it has served over 255,000 meals since June 2025 and carried out more than 13,000 street-based crisis interventions since August 2025.

There is an urgent need for an extension of the City of Ottawa's funding for Centre 454, currently located in the basement of St. Alban's Church, which ends in January 2027. Belong Ottawa is seeking an extension to allow time to plan a transition and maintain services for those who depend on the Centre.

Bylaw Amendments

Motions introducing two minor amendments to the Diocese's bylaws were presented and approved.

- **Cemetery Management:** Clarified that cemetery regulations apply to cemeteries associated with individual congregations, as well as parishes.
- **Governance of Parish Councils:** Restores provisions inadvertently left out of a previous revision, allowing the Incumbent and Wardens to fill Parish Council vacancies by appointment between vestry meetings.

Diocesan Partnership Committee

- The Diocesan Partnership Committee's three responsibilities: assessing potential partners for approval by the Bishop and Diocesan Council, supporting diocesan liaisons, and ensuring partnerships remain active, meaningful and visible.
- The Diocese's 10 current partners address local and global issues, including homelessness, climate change and community division.
- Parishes can participate through initiatives such as supporting Princess Basma Hospital in Jerusalem, planting trees through the Communion Forest, or joining Ottawa's Tulipathon for the Multifaith Housing Initiative.

Education and Learning Commons

- The Education Committee plans to make the diocesan Learning Commons more accessible and responsive to parish needs.
- The application form for sharing parish activities and resources has been simplified, and there will be a brief survey distributed to parishes to identify needed resources for inclusion in the diocesan Learning Commons.

Contextual Mission

The diocese aims for every parish to establish one new or renewed contextual mission initiative by 2028, supported by parish guides, leadership courses, coaching, facilitation and Future Fund grants. More information on the program, and how to apply, is available on the Diocesan website [here](#).

Results

- Of the diocese's 50 parishes, 35 are engaged in contextual mission. Four parishes completed the *Unfolding Gospel* course, seven are taking the Centre for Missional Leadership's church formation course, eight parish leaders have taken courses through the Niagara School for Missional Leadership, eight parishes are working with facilitators, and eight parishes have received Future Fund grants.
- A Contextual Mission Symposium is planned for the spring of 2028 that may include keynote speakers, reports from other dioceses for inspiration and practical advice.

Examples of Contextual Mission happening in the Diocese of Ottawa include:

Julian's Place - A program hosted by Julian of Norwich offering hospitality and connection to Algonquin College students.

Forest Church - Led by Christ Church, Bells Corners, this program offers creation-themed Eucharist services in a forest setting.

Centre 440 - An outreach program of the Parish of the Lower Valley serving hot meals to the community and a lunch program at Van Kleeck Hill Collegiate Institute high school.

Provincial Youth Gathering Report

Colson Puchala presented on his experiences attending the first Youth Gathering for the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario in the summer of 2025. He reported that they discussed empowering youth and amplifying their voices in parishes and the wider Church.

All My Relations Episcopal Panel

Representatives from the panel reported on a diocesan-wide survey it conducted on efforts to follow through on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #59. This calls on churches to educate members about the legacy of Indian residential schools. The survey indicated many activities are currently taking place in parishes, including land

acknowledgements, orange shirt observances, special services, Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers' presentations, educational activities, and community projects reflecting Anishinaabe teachings. Parishes also identified the need for resources, funding, stronger Indigenous relationships, and support for Inuit-led ministry.

Nominations Report

Provincial Synod

All the nominees for election to Provincial Synod were acclaimed.

Lay: Caroll Carkner, Stephen Giles, Sandy Holmes and Daniel Jerusalemaic.

Youth: Colson Puchala

Clergy: The Rev. Dr. Mary-Cate Garden, the Rev. Gillian Hoyer, the Rev. Canon Doug Richards, and the Rev. Susan Smandych

Advisory Panel on Termination of Clerical Appointments

All the nominees for election were acclaimed.

Lay: Paul Dumbrille

Clergy: The Rev. Canon Allan Budzin, The Rev. Rosemary Parker

Diocesan Council

Candidates approved for **three-year positions** on Diocesan Council were:

Clergy: The Rev. Canon Dr. Jon Martin; the Rev. Karen McBride, The Rev. Dr. Alana McCord and the Rev. Matthew Brown

Lay: Kathryn Fournier, Christine Ormsby, and Mike Strong

Financial Update

- The 2025 audited statements were presented.
- Total consolidated assets were \$157 million for the year across the board, up about \$2 million from \$155 million the year before.
- Liabilities went up to \$131 million from \$128 million the year before. The difference relates to non-church buildings owned by the Diocese such as Hollyer House and Cornerstone buildings. The asset values offset debt that we carry against those buildings.
- Diocesan investments in the Consolidated Trust Fund (CTF) were \$32 million at the end of 2025, compared to \$29 million in 2024. (Cornerstone funds of \$5 million are included in this figure.)
- Revenues were at \$9.4 million, expenditures at \$10.5 million, so there was \$1 million shortfall. \$900,000 was covered by unrealized market value gains in the diocesan CTF, which left a small deficit of about \$100,000.

Centre for Anglican Studies

- **Launch of the Centre for Anglican Studies:** The launch will take place on April 1, 2027. This builds on the university's Anglican studies programme established in 1981.
- **Art and Faith:** The Centre will host a fabric art installation by British Columbia-based Anglican artist Karen Brodie, exploring the Stations of the Cross throughout Lent.
- **Worship and Reconciliation:** PhD candidate Joshua Zentn-Barrett will lead a workshop examining the influence of colonialism on Anglican worship, exploring themes of power, Englishness, and reconciliation.
- **National Conference:** The Centre will sponsor and host the Anglican Deacons of Canada Conference from June 3-6, 2027.

<https://ustpaul.ca/en/faculty-of-theology/anglican-studies-program/>

National Church Pathways

- General Synod 2025 adopted *Creating Pathways for the Transformational Change of the General Synod* to guide the national church's work over the current three-year period.
- The Transformation Task Force oversees six working groups focused on Governance, Management and Operations, Inclusion and Diversity, Communications Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Relations and Northern Ministry.
- **Overreaching Goals:** The initiative aims to ensure that the national Church reflects God's love through justice, inclusion and diversity and to support dioceses and parishes through national connections, shared resources, learning dialogue, and effective communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively in different contexts.

First Reflection: Dr. Catherine Clifford, Saint Paul University

Dr. Catherine Clifford, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, reflected on the Roman Catholic Church's 2023-2024 Synod on For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission, highlighting its opening ecumenical liturgy with leaders of Christian world communions. She emphasized receptive ecumenism—approaching dialogue with a willingness to learn from and receive the gifts of other Christian traditions.

Saturday, October 24, 2026

Stewardship

- Stewardship was presented as a year-round expression of faith, generosity and belonging, encompassing the sharing of time, talent and treasure. Welcoming communities, meaningful relationships and recognition of people's gifts encourage participation and generosity.
- The Stewardship Resource Hub and Learning Commons provide practical resources, training and opportunities for parishes to share successful practices.

- Resources include financial stewardship materials, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) campaign resources, Legacy Giving webinars and communications training.

Upcoming Webinars and Workshops

- **Communications webinar:** Social media accessibility, photography and media relations November 17, 2026, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
- **Website webinar:** February 2, 2027, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
- **Legacy Giving webinar:** Held October 27, 2026; a recording will be posted on the diocesan website.
- **Stewardship Resource Hub:** Presentation at Clergy Day on November 10, 2026, with a further workshop planned for spring 2027.
- **Communications webinar** recordings will be available through ADOLearningCommons.ca

Funding Opportunities

- Anglican Foundation of Canada: The next application deadline is November 3, 2026, for the January 1 funding cycle. Applications require Diocesan Council approval.
- Future Fund: Application deadlines are November 1 and March 15; funding of up to \$10,000 is available.

Operating Budget 2027

- The Diocese is adopting a one-year budget for 2027 rather than its usual three-year cycle.
- A general 3% increase has been applied to many budget lines, based on the Consumer Price Index. Salary and benefit figures remain provisional pending final decisions.
- Parish Proportional Share (PPS): The total has increased by 3% to approximately \$1.84 million, representing 40% of budget revenue. Each parish's contribution is calculated using a three-year average of its assessable income, so individual increases will vary.
- Budget deficit: The proposed budget has a deficit of approximately \$200,000 on a budget of \$4.5 million. This is considered manageable and will be covered by accumulated surpluses of approximately \$8-\$8.5 million.
- One major concern raised during the presentation was that our Diocese is owed approximately \$490,000 in overdue parish commitments from previous years. These outstanding amounts include more than Parish Proportional Share. They can also cover clergy services, employee salaries and building insurance. Because some parishes pay late or have accumulated arrears, our Diocese must sometimes borrow money to meet its own obligations. The increased borrowing costs are a major reason administration expenses have risen, with the net cost of this budget area increasing from \$286,000 to \$518,000.

Diocesan Capital Improvement Fund

- The Bishop introduced a new proposed fund explaining that in months since her election she has heard about the urgent financial challenges facing parishes that need significant repairs or improvements to their church buildings and properties. She

acknowledged their frustration learning that the former Church Extension Fund could no longer provide mortgage-style loans.

- Approximately three to four years ago, the fund was folded into the Diocese's undesignated investments in the Consolidated Trust Fund (CTF). This change helped generate investment income to support diocesan operations and reduce the financial burden on parishes through lower proportional shares. But it means that new loans can no longer be issued through the former Church Extension Fund.
- The Bishop introduced a proposal for a new fund to help parishes manage major building repairs that it aims to launch by mid- 2027. Approximately \$750,000 has been identified as seed funding from selected undesignated CTF trust assets. The fund is still being developed, and its final criteria have not yet been approved.
- The proposed approach includes:
 - Offering short-term loans at market interest rates.
 - Providing only a percentage of a project's total cost, rather than covering the entire expense.
 - Requiring building condition assessments to identify necessary repairs and establish priorities.
 - Evaluating the financial feasibility of projects and the parish's long-term future. Requiring strong stewardship plans to demonstrate that parishes can repay loans while meeting their other financial commitments.

The Diocese is also exploring ways to reduce the costs and complexity of building projects by:

- Establishing relationships with qualified building assessment firms and contractors.
- Negotiating arrangements that could reduce assessment costs through economies of scale.
- Helping parishes prioritize urgent repairs and develop realistic timelines for completing projects.
- Learning from other dioceses that have established similar funds.

If diocesan property is sold in the future, a portion of the proceeds may be added to the new fund to increase its capital. No motion was required at this Synod because the Diocese intends to move forward with the work, but the proposal will be submitted to Diocesan Council.

Second Reflection

Dr. Catherine Clifford's second reflection emphasized synodality as an ongoing practice of prayer, deep listening, dialogue, and shared discernment. She highlighted the importance of seeking unity amid differences, building Christian friendships, and responding compassionately to changing patterns of faith, particularly among younger generations. She encouraged the Church to view declining participation and institutional challenges as opportunities for spiritual renewal, while acknowledging past and present harms. The international Synod demonstrated how dialogue can strengthen relationships and overcome divisions. Synodality continues beyond formal meetings through daily practices in parish and diocesan life.

Thanks and Final Announcements

The Rev. Canon Stephen Silverthorne thanked all those who contributed to the successful organization of the annual Diocesan Synod. On behalf of the Diocese, Bishop Kathryn expressed her gratitude for the Rev. Canon Stephen Silverthorne's dedicated service as Clerical Secretary to Synod, announcing his departure from the role. Synod members gave him a standing ovation in recognition of his years of devoted and exemplary service.