Office of the Primate

The Anglican Church of Canada
L'Église anglicane du Canada

November 2, 2026

The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa
Sent by email

Beloved in Christ,

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the ordination of women in the Anglican Church of Canada, and as the Diocese of Ottawa marks its 130th Anniversary with women holding the offices of Dean and Bishop, it my delight to lift up the story of how the Cathedral Girls Choir came into being twenty-five years ago.

By 2001, Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa had been the site of many firsts for women: Frances Macdonnell became Cathedral Organist and Director of Music in 1980, the same year Sally Eaton and Sara Boyles were the first women to be ordained as priests in its sanctuary; in 1985, Kate Lawson became the first woman to be a senior warden; and in 1987 the Reverend Gwenda Wells was the first woman appointed to serve as a priest in the Cathedral.

The idea of a Cathedral Girls Choir had been a topic of conversation and study for several years but had reached an impasse as the new millennium was beginning. While there was support for the idea, the will to simply make it happen was elusive.

In late 2000, I met with Timothy Piper, a former Cathedral chorister and popular, multi-talented musician. I candidly asked if he would be willing to start a Girls Choir if funding could be arranged—acknowledging that it would have to be built as it began. He felt moved to accept the challenge, so I approached the gentlemen of the Cathedral's Trust Fund (who knew and admired Tim) to secure sufficient start-up funds. From there, with the consent of the churchwardens and the cooperation of the Director of Music, Tim was hired and the Cathedral Girls Choir was finally poised to become a reality in 2001.

Very quickly, many members of the Cathedral, excited by the prospect, stepped up to offer support, and girls and their families from across the region began to sign up. The Cathedral Girls Choir soon took on shape, form, and a distinctive sound to become a beloved, robust, and dynamic part of the life and ministry of the Anglican cathedral in the nation's capital—going from strength to strength when James Calkin became its second director.

It was a great joy to play a part in establishing the Girls Choir and to see how it has touched so many lives over the last twenty-five years. When we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to turn the call to seek and serve Christ in all persons into concrete action, everyone's gifts can be celebrated, and everyone benefits.

With kindest blessings and heartfelt congratulations to all as you celebrate women in leadership in this three-fold anniversary year.

Yours in Christ,



The Most Reverend Shane Parker
Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada