Bishop's Charge

I would like to start with an announcement.

At our last synod, I had the great honour of collating our beloved in Christ
Mrs. Vicki Townson as a canon to the stall of St. James the Great.

In this service tonight, I have the great honour and privilege of collating
our beloved in Christ
the Rev. Deacon Danielle McKenzie
as Honorary Cathedral Canon of the stall of St. Peter.

To collate is to recognize or appoint; a canon represents a standard.

Tonight we recognize Danielle as someone whose life and ministry
exemplify a standard of selfless Christian service.

Through her work with the food bank, women's shelter, her parish, and the wider diocese,
she embodies the love of Christ,
especially for those whom the world too often overlooks.

Her open and steadfast devotion to our Lord and Saviour Jesus the Christ is inspiring.

We have been greatly blessed by her ministry – as she displays the Image of God
which she has been created to be.

This evening, we are going to recognize Danielle as a "canon"
(sounds painful, but it shouldn't be).

This is part of living in loving relationship, where we can recognize and celebrate each other,
not participating in jealousy or envy,
but in genuine joy and appreciation
that God has placed such a disciple in our midst.

Thank you, Rev. Deacon Danielle, and thank you, Jesus.

We have come a long way.

Through the dedication of our Diocesan Executive Council,
its sub-committees,
our administrative assistant,
and all of you in your parishes,
we have strengthened our finances, regulations, and properties
—the infrastructure necessary for effective ministry.

I am deeply grateful.

We have come a long way.

And we are just beginning.

The point of all this work is given by the name administration
– from the Latin ‘ad’, towards, and ‘ministration’, ministry.
All the work we have done is *towards ministry.*

Witnessing God’s kingdom be further established, across our diocese.

Inviting people in,
through our words and our actions,
to become part of the community of Christ,
and welcoming them as they come.

Being the people of Christ.

All this activity is with the intention of aligning *everything we do*
(everything!)
to experiencing and sharing the love of Christ.

Constantly asking, “what is the healthiest thing to do now?”

In my Bishop’s Charge of 2023, I challenged us
not with any grand plan or strategy or suggesting a program we should adopt
– because for me,
it is all about culture.

I shared the parish WHY statements which we had discovered
in our visits to each of your worship centres.

I challenged us to have loving relationship in community,
community with each other and
community with God,
just because that is our culture,
that is *who you are.*

And you have been doing so!
Through thrift stores,
soup kitchens,
food banks,
open-invitation coffee gatherings,
movie nights,
neighbourhood barbeques,

youth events,
and everyday acts of kindness.
Through these, you are telling your neighbours:

You matter.

We care about you.

God cares about you.

You have been doing it as well
with the gracious and loving manner
in which you regard *each other*,
in your prayers,
and in your worship of the Almighty Triune God
and our Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Just as in 2023, I am not now going to announce
any grand plan or strategy,
or suggest a program we should adopt
– instead, let us continue to form our culture.

Daily, habitual, loving.

Asking, "what is the healthiest thing to do right now?"

This is critical,
because our society is becoming more,
and more, critical.

I have heard concerning stories regarding MAiD,
where it's presented as if MAiD is the low-cost alternative to actual care.

It is heartbreaking to walk through the cemeteries of some of our communities
and see the number of people who have
killed themselves,
on purpose or accidentally.
Especially the young ones.

The despair and anger in some of our communities is real and alarming.

Addictions, Homelessness, our healthcare, our treatment of each other
-- all a concern --
both at home and internationally.

This is actually part of a recurring pattern throughout human history.

This evening we heard Elijah say,
"I have had enough!
Everyone has abandoned you, Lord.
Everyone has walked away.
Just kill me and let it be over with."
2,900 years ago, Elijah had had enough.

Teresa of Avila, whose feast-day we celebrate today,
saw worldliness and the neglect of God.
She felt the God we love was being walked away from.
500 years ago, Teresa of Avila had had enough.

I am feeling that the Canadian world, for the most part,
has abandoned God and walked away.

We have entered the cult of "I",
where self-worship is prized over everything else.

Just like those other times,
and also including the time of Jesus.

Assisted by the eternal church which has gone before us,
now is *our time* to live as faithful witnesses to Christ in the world as we find it,
sometimes challenging it,
sometimes cooperating with it,
but,
and,
always loving the people in it.

Because without that, the God we love is walked away from.

*Now is **our** time to have had enough.*

The question is **always**,
"What could we do
here and now
that would move this situation
toward Christ's love, health, wholeness, and peace?"

The problem with almost all the questions society poses
is that they always start at the wrong point:
the word "I".

And then we compound matters by forcing it to a vote.

I'm sorry, but somethings are just not to be voted on.

And let us not start
by assuming
the cult of "I."

No. Rather,
the right place to start is,
God says,
"I call you by name, you are mine. You are precious and special in my sight and I love you. Do not be afraid, for I am with you."' (Isaiah 43:1-4)

The right place to start is,
"Do not worry about your life.
Instead, pursue God's kingdom.
Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give you the kingdom."'
(Luke 12:22-32)

The right place to start is,
The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
Even when I must walk through the darkest valley, I fear no danger.
God's goodness and faithfulness will pursue me forever. (Psalm 23)

The right place to start is,
God so loved the world that He gave His Son,
so that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.
God sent his Son **not to condemn** the world,
but that the world **should be saved through Him**. (John 3:16-17)

The right place to start is,
"The Father loves you just as He loves the Christ." (John 17:23)

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Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we do not start where the world starts;
we start **with** the Holy Spirit.
We embrace all through the guidance of the Holy Spirit,
in the sacrifice of Christ,
with the love of the Dearest Father in heaven.

Jesus said the bible can be summed up as
"Love God and love your neighbour."

We love God and our neighbour
in our daily worship,
in our praying together,
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in being filled with Christ in spirit and in sacrament,
and in following Christ together
to seek the flourishing of the world.

That captures our Anglican via media:
common prayer rather than merely private belief;
Scripture read in conversation with tradition and reason;
sacramental living in which Christ is a very real part of your life;
via media, the middle way,
holding truth in creative tension;
and a strong conviction that through our worship
God forms us for
holy life,
holy community,
and holy service in the world.

That is what **we can control**.
We can control if we pray in community.
We can control if we are allowing ourselves to be transformed in sacramental worship.
We can control if and how we live Christ out.

We do not control the results!
Do you know how freeing it is to try your best at something,
but not actually worry about the results?

The prayed-for fruit is shalom—
people and communities becoming whole
in relationship with God,
one another,
themselves,
and creation,
as we love and celebrate them
with God.

As Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be distressed. Believe."

If people are encountering Christ,
relationships being made,
communities becoming healthier,
disciples being formed,
the vulnerable being embraced,
clergy and congregations supporting each other,
then we are becoming agents of shalom
—then we are truly living out our diocesan vocation.

I saw a glimpse of this yesterday,

so, I want to thank those who responded to my survey on shalom.
The results were fascinating.

Two themes stood out for me.

First, people repeatedly described experiencing
wholeness in faith,
belonging,
mutual care,
meaningful participation and relationships
—often *independent of outward measures of success.*

As one wrote, **"faithfulness, compassion, and simply being there for each other."**

Second, while people's health,
economics,
institutions,
spirituality,
justice,
and environment
all matter,
the relationships connecting them
matter just as much
or more.

Indeed, some wrote of wholeness even amid suffering.
Favourable circumstances alone do not define or guarantee shalom.

Being cared for, valued, and able to belong
emerged as a central theme.

And isn't that mimicking the ministry of Jesus?

He healed bodies, yes, but He also
restored relationships,
offered forgiveness,
welcomed outsiders,
and drew people into communion
with God.

That is our calling.

Shalom is the wholeness we seek in relationship
with God,
ourselves,
one another,

and creation.

The way we pursue it is simple
though *not* always easy:
love God
with all you are
and love your neighbours
as yourself.

Through prayer,
worship,
forgiveness,
justice,
practical care,
and faithful companionship,
including when suffering remains.

With
kindness,
humility,
gentleness,
and patience.

Doing so, we join in God's great project.

Do what you can control
and leave the results to God.

Pray together.

Allow Christ to transform you.

Live His love in the world.

Doing so, we become **the Church in action:**
empowered by the Holy Spirit,
embracing all.

So, the question for ourselves,
our parishes and congregations, is not
"Are we surviving?"

That is totally *the wrong focus*.

The question is,

“Are we praying together?

Are we being transformed?

Are we living it out?”

Let us do what we can control.

And gift God with realizing the results.

We
are just beginning.

Amen.