

## Summary of the 142<sup>nd</sup> Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa has stepped away from *being* changed and chosen instead to *lead* change, Bishop Shane Parker told the 142<sup>nd</sup> meeting of Synod on Saturday.

He was speaking after Synod endorsed several motions to advance work on the diocese's transformative strategic priority, the Shape of Parish Ministry project. Voting for them, Bishop Shane said in his [charge](#) to Synod on Thursday night, would "instill the life and work of our diocesan church with new purpose and direction."

Ultimately, undertaking the work involved in changing the Shape of Parish Ministry says "We want to be part of a church that is thriving," Bishop Shane said.

The Shape of Parish Ministry was announced as a strategic priority at the 140<sup>th</sup> Synod in 2020. The goal was to discern what parish ministry should look like in a changing world in order to thrive while serving God and the greater community. After two years of listening, gathering information, developing profiles of parishes, discussing ideas and sharing proposals, it's not surprising motions on the Shape of Parish Ministry's three proposals dominated much of the Synod's Friday and Saturday sessions. The proposals are:

- Shape of parish ministry: strengthening for the future;
- Lifelong formation: nurturing parish ministry; and
- Engagement with the world: new worshipping communities and contextual mission.

There were seven motions designed to provide the framework for the Shape of Parish Ministry, including clarifying parish structures, promoting consolidation and collaboration on administration and other practical ideas for relieving the organizational burdens on parishes. All passed.

The three motions under lifelong formation focused on training to build skills and on identifying and sharing resources (in particular, through diocesan "resource pods" of people with expertise in a given area), also passed.

It was the three engagement motions that stirred the most energy during the synod. Their focus is to develop new worshipping communities and contextual mission, which according to the Venerable Mark Whittall who introduced the motions, is "learning how to share the love of God in ways that are meaningful to our neighbours in 2022."

Speaker after speaker urged people to be innovative, creative and to take risks in doing that, and others reminded us to remember the richness from which we come and to honour our traditions. Pilot projects will be developed, tried, assessed and reported on to Synod 2023. Funding will be available from the Second Century Fund (to be renamed the fFuture Fund), part of the diocese's endowment funds.

While there was a strong focus on the future, the ongoing work of the diocese was also discussed. All of our community ministries all saw a surge in demand during the pandemic, director general of community ministries Canon Peter John Hobbs told Synod, and met that demand as best they could despite facing some major setbacks, including fires at two of our facilities, Cornerstone Housing for Women's Booth Street residence and St. Luke's Table. Nevertheless, Bishop Shane said that both the expertise and capacity exists for the community ministry arm of our diocese to expand as need increases.

In the third year of COVID-19, the state of our diocese's finances and the 2023 budget were a matter of considerable interest. Sanjay Grover, director of financial ministry, reported 2021 revenue of \$7.02 million and expenditures of \$7.6 million for a deficit of \$576,000. However, that was offset by investment gains of \$469,000, bringing the deficit down to \$107,000.

Mr. Grover said upheaval in the stock market means the value of our investments has dropped about 15 per cent overall, but while "we are in it for the long haul," he advised against parishes undertaking large capital projects at this point, when funds held by our diocese have dropped so significantly.

The Venerable Chris Dunn, chair of the Property and Finance Committee, presented the 2023 budget. Unusually, it covers only one year, because the impact reshaping our parish ministries will have makes our standard three-year budget cycle impractical. Projected spending of \$4,255,341 is up roughly \$370,000 from 2022. Revenues are up in some areas, but down in others, and the end result is a balanced budget.

The diocesan chancellor, Canon Henry Schultz, is working to bring the management of the many parish cemeteries in our diocese in line with Ontario provincial regulations.

Synod's work was enhanced by the presence of the Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, who gave four reflections over our day and a half, mostly on the diocese's plans and commitments but also on the national church and some issues raised by questioners.

She spoke of the important, difficult and long-term work of dismantling racism and increasing diversity in leadership of the church at all levels, and recognizing the deep vein of colonialism that is inherent in a church brought by the British to the places they colonized. All facets of the church need decolonizing, Archbishop Linda said.

She also spoke about the divide between those provinces of the Anglican church that support same-sex marriage and those that do not, and the need to listen and recognize the cultural differences that have led to those different positions. However, Archbishop Linda is concerned focus on that issue has led to us to ignore other important issues such as racism and colonialism. "Sometimes," she said, "the Holy Spirit needs a rest. Not because it isn't important, but because we have reached a stalemate."

Synod heard a chorus of other important voices when the youth and young adults invited to observe commented on what they saw. One called for more focus on individual spiritual development, important for young people just learning who they are and what their faith means. Another called for "genuine inclusion" for young people (who are not, they pointed out, all alike). A third called for "equal standing, equal voice" for young people in parish and diocesan work. And one urged parishes to offer a comfortable place to practice faith (play different music, speak different languages, worship in new ways that suit people who are from outside your world), saying "I hope that in the future we continue to grow and make our church a home because it's not only a house of God, it's a home with God."