

The Incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron  
Popular Report for the 168th Session  
May 16-18, 2010

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“Out of Exile” – A Family Gathered

There’s an old adage that we shouldn’t mix business with pleasure but in the case of this year’s Synod of the Diocese of Huron in the See City of London no such warning need apply. Business and pleasure and worship and praise intermingled into what seemed as much a family gathering as a business meeting. The presence of our Youth and their active participation in the business and praise offering of God’s family made it clear that they are spiritually alive and very invested in the future of the family.

Bishop Bob encouraged us in his welcome to Synod (which you can read on the newly designed website) to be prepared to playfully explore our theme of coming “out of exile” and what it means for the Diocese of Huron. Being part of God’s family automatically makes us familiar with the experience of living in exile – this is not our home – and the choice of how we journey out together is ours.

In place of the Bishop’s Charge to Synod this year, Bishop Bennett provided focus and inspiration through his homily in the Opening Service of Synod, reminding us that “we are hardwired with a desire to make the journey home...to dwell in the fullest presence of God’s love and glory.” Central to Bishop Bennett’s message were the words of Second Isaiah, “Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”

The physical layout of our meeting space at the London Convention Centre for the duration of Synod was an early sign that discussion and sharing between delegates was not only welcome but encouraged. Instead of the familiar configuration of one head table and many long rows of seating there was one smaller head table and many round tables for the delegates. Organizers and support staff were readily available and accessible at stations beside the platform making it easy for delegates to have needs addressed as they arose.

At the beginning of Monday’s session Bishop Bob started with an Episcopal Word to the Church noting that “a church in exile is a church on the move..a church that has left the known of the past to intentionally journey into the unknown of the future...to that place where God is leading us” and that we do all this with God among us. Naming the Five Marks of Mission -

- 1) Proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom
- 2) Teaching / baptizing / nurturing new believers
- 3) Responding to human need by loving service
- 4) Seeking to transform unjust structures of society
- 5) Safeguarding the integrity of creation

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as the lens through which we “maintain the balance between hope and reality”, Bishop Bob asked us to keep them in the forefront of our minds throughout our Synod experience and to listen for turn-around strategies that will help us gather what we need in order to follow our call. Expressing his appreciation for the laity and clergy of Huron Diocese Bishop Bob highlighted that he has always known our diocese is a special place with a wonderful family of faith that he honours “whenever and wherever he gets the opportunity.”

Our keynote speaker was the Reverend Canon Nick Brotherwood, a team leader for Fresh Expressions Canada as well as Bishop’s Missioner to Young Adults in Montreal and an active pastor. After bringing us greetings from the Diocese of Montreal Canon Brotherwood gently challenged us to look at what it means to be Anglican Christians in an age and culture where following Jesus is not valued as being very important. He reminded us that there are many people who don’t even know who Jesus is, and that at the same time, new opportunities are popping up to live the gospel in our communities through which we can demonstrate the power of the love and grace of God.

Canon Brotherwood applauded Huron for bringing the Five Marks of Mission into the forefront and expanding the conversation on how we can be faithful to the gospel of Christ in the present. Exploring the example of changing telephone styles from the candlestick phone to the iphone, he inspired us to consider how we can use our imagination to think about ourselves differently as people of mission. Where once upon a time we could invite people to come to services with us, now many people won’t because the divide between their experience and our traditional life in the church is more than they can cross. Rather than seeing this time as a winter season in the church, Canon Brotherwood called on us to see it as springtime, where we can move outward into places God is already working.

The Reverend Jenny Andison of the Diocese of Toronto also spoke to us about how fresh expressions of church have taken shape in Toronto. Using a picture of the Choluteca Bridge in Honduras, Reverend Andison showed us how after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 the bridge survived but the river moved out from underneath it and now flows *beside* the bridge. She pointed to how this could be a metaphor for what is happening in the church...the river moved...the spiritual hunger for God is there but we have to go to it. Reverend Andison also reminded us that Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury has spoken of a “mixed economy church” where “fresh expressions of church exist alongside the inherited or traditional church, coexisting in a relationship of mutual respect and support.” Her comments were followed by engaging discussions within the

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mixed delegations of laity and clergy. Synod was given a lot to think about in terms of promoting missional conversations in parishes throughout the Diocese.

The report from the Administration and Finance Committee (A&F) delivered by Mr. Jeff Boyce confirmed that the current financial position is a challenge for the Diocese. Litigation costs for 2009 have been close to \$200,000 and there is a similar projection for 2010. Mr. Boyce noted that with great care and good leadership the Diocese will meet the challenges it faces. In this vein, Synod was advised that any motions that have a financial impact on diocesan budgetary funds will need to first be submitted to the Administration and Finance Committee for review.

Based on a decision of Diocesan Council at its February 2010 meeting, regional funding in 2010 has been suspended to help in the reduction of the deficit. A further motion to suspend regional funding for 2011 *and any subsequent years for as long as the Diocese of Huron is in an accumulated deficit financial position* was also successful. Regarding the Youth Motion for youth mission work, the requirement for diocesan funds has been suspended however any motions made by youth in the event they raise money for missions may still be submitted to the Administration and Finance Committee for consideration.

Regarding Eucharistic Hospitality, a motion was passed to memorialize the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada requesting a review of the current policy. As we find new ways of being together as a worshipping community in outreach, some clear guidance is needed to assist existing and new parishes in the Diocese.

As part of our ongoing desire to “safeguard the integrity of creation” (see the Fifth Mark of Mission) the EnviroAction Committee brought forth a successful motion for Synod to encourage “every parish and congregation to review the Indaba [meaning ‘consensus’ in Zulu] documents on the Diocesan EnviroAction Committee website and to find appropriate ways to incorporate the priorities into parish life.” Looking out across the sea of tables in the Convention Centre it was clear to see that people have joined these initiatives using refillable personal water containers in lieu of plastic bottles. Well done!

On a celebratory note, Synod supported a motion that Her Majesty’s Royal Chapel of the Mohawks Brantford be recognized and appreciated for “the relationship it represents between the Church and aboriginal people of Canada, ...and as a means of healing and wholeness for all peoples.” The Mohawk Chapel is the oldest Protestant church in Ontario and the only royal chapel outside of Great Britain and it is celebrating its 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010.

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On Monday afternoon the Lenni-Lenape, Algonkian, Iroquoian Council of the Diocese of Huron (LAIC) along with the Ad Hawk Committee and leaders from Truth and Reconciliation led Synod through a powerful, interactive exercise where we were given the opportunity to visualize the impact of European domination upon First Nations people through land treaties and the residential school system. There was a palpable sense of community grief and healing, hope and promise of renewal as we joined together in a circle around the room in silent reflection and prayer. In that moment, the theme of coming out of exile and finding the way home together with God's help came to life for many people.

Another inspirational moment in Synod presented itself in the form of a personal presentation by a delegate on the impact of mental illness. The voices in the room became silent as one person shared the need for support and acceptance for so many people already participating in God's family and those to come. A blessing service is being prepared with the help of both clergy and laity. One youth delegate spoke on how at Youth Synod they had already been considering how they can become more aware and more engaged in demonstrating Jesus' love and care alongside people who experience mental illness.

Synod also received its first report from the newly formed Social Justice Committee. In their inaugural presentation, The Reverend Christine Brouillard-Coyle, The Reverend Deacon Tom Patterson and Margaret Walker noted the Committee is a voice to educate, empower and facilitate change within the Diocese. There was ample discussion among delegates and feedback was provided to the Committee to help them in their work.

Newly collated Archdeacon Jawn Kolohon and the new Lay Canon Marilyn Malton presented the report from the Congregational Coaching Team. The team works alongside parishes that are seeking sustainable action plans to support growth and change. The desire and goal of the team is to support a spiritually regenerated Church under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Bob reported to Synod that Bishop Ed Leidel, who has now moved on to work in Milwaukee left a significant library of resources with the Diocese to support its work.

The Strategic Planning Task Force changed the way it reported to Synod this year. Delivering several mini-presentations throughout the two days of Synod enabled delegates to receive a clear reporting of the priorities of the strategic plan. Presentations were made by Mr. John Mencil, The Venerable June Hough and The Venerable Richard Salt. They shared the vision for the Diocese: "a people transformed in Christ by God's Spirit" and highlighted that this will be generated by God and sustained by

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aligning with the direction of the Holy Spirit. Presenters noted that patience and trust in each other is essential so that the body of Christ will be built up and prepared in order for God's people to live their mission. Priorities identified in the draft of the Long Term Strategic Plan include an external focus on mission, vocational discernment and formation of clergy and laity and the effective use of financial, physical and other resources.

The Reverend Georgina Foster-Haig presented a report on 11 refugee families that have arrived as part of PWRDF's goal to host families as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> year celebration, with the most recent newcomer family arriving in the afternoon after the closing of Synod. Through a video presentation it was clear that many families have benefited from this initiative and from the support and encouragement they are now receiving in their new surroundings.

The Huron Hunger Fund wrapped up its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at Synod with a successful motion targeting the 2011 contribution at \$300,000 and video congratulations from Primate Fred Hiltz and Bishop Desmond Tutu. The Reverend Canon Greg Smith announced that Synod had raised \$36,200 toward the target! Many enjoyed hand-scooped ice cream as part of the fundraising effort.

One motion was defeated by Synod: an amendment to the Constitution proposing that Synod be held every two years instead of annually. Many voices spoke respectfully and passionately of their desire to meet annually for education, encouragement and support, especially in light of this time of expected change as Diocesan leadership examines what we need to do to be faithful to our call in Christ. The motion was offered in consideration of the current financial situation and this was appreciated by both clergy and laity. Many people spoke of the positive impact of their experience at Synod as a time of bringing our Diocesan family together. When the vote came, the motion was soundly defeated by both clergy and lay delegates.

As Bishop Bob said in his Episcopal Word to the Church, this Synod had a different feel to it. The Bishop's Sermon in lieu of a Charge to Synod, the reconfigured layout and the intentional shift toward relationship-building while doing the business of the Diocese created a desire in many people to have more of the same. Comments in the report to Synod of the Human Resources Committee indicate that the clergy and laity of Huron prefer to see their Bishops as Pastors, Shepherds and Visionaries rather than Administrators or CEOs and it was clear that our Bishops attended to both sets of expectations with great care during this Synod. Judging by the many positive comments in the halls, this Synod Organizing Committee has also done an excellent job of facilitating the coming-together of our Diocesan family.

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In his closing summary to Synod, Bishop Terry reminded us we have been challenged to “look at what we knew but didn’t want to look at or were afraid of...the world changed and we didn’t...this is not an easy time to be church, we might not have chosen this but this is what God gave us and we need to be faithful.”

Following the Synod Banquet, the following retirees were recognized: The Rev’d Don Alcock, The Rev’d Peter Aquilina, The Rev’d Margaret Greenhow, The Rev’d Brian McKay, The Rev’d Gary Parker and The Rev’d Dana Rodgers.

Respectfully submitted by

Laura Lightfoot