

# SINGING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND



## **The 183<sup>rd</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Huron** MAY 28-29, 2023

### **SYNOD 2023 POPULAR REPORT**

At 4:30 PM, on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023, the 183rd Synod meeting began. The pews of St. Paul's Cathedral were filled with song as many gathered to share in the Holy Eucharist in the physical church and online.

Rt. Rev. Dr. Todd Townshend, the Bishop of Huron, officiated and Rt. Rev. Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, the Bishop of Willesden (Diocese of London UK), shared his reflections and visions from the pulpit. Also present at Huron Synod was Archbishop Marinez Bassotto, our old friend from the Diocese of Amazonia who was recently elected Primate of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil.

In the spirit of the Synod theme reflecting on the diversity in church - Singing the Lord's song in a strange land - multiplicity of voices and languages could be heard during the first reading (Acts, 2:1-21). Luke's account of the Day of Pentecost was read in ten languages. At the conclusion of service, Bishop Todd presented Order of Huron to Mr. Mark Charlton and Dr. Olive Elm.

After the service all went to a banquet at the RBC place to share in fellowship, where the rest of the meeting would continue the next day.

May 29, the conference for the 183rd Synod began. The Call to Order sounded, and all delegates, guests and observers were welcomed.

After everyone assembled online (23 persons) and in person (259 persons), Rev. Canon Marian Haggerty commemorated the faithful departed and their legacy.

Bishop Todd took a moment to remember the previous three years that have led us to where we are now and described it in three phases.

The first phase is the domination of the pandemic and forces of change. This phase is full of loss and can be painful, but in that loss, while many negative things occurred, it gave room for some positive things to begin.

The second phase was the phase of recovery. Not in the recovery of returning to the way things were but working towards strength and health. It is the exploration of new gifts and a new way of being. The Holy Spirit calls us to yield to it and be recalled into serving. The governance of the Diocese of Huron was examined, and it was confirmed that no change to the constitution was needed at this time but that any changes needed could be made within the current structure. These examinations were done to see how the Holy Spirit is calling the Diocese of Huron to serve the parishes within it and the wider world.

We are now entering phase three! Phase three is transforming and focusing on an active strategy with our human and material resources. It is about renewing and recreating. Bishop Todd pointed out that all the plans in the world can be created but will only sit on the shelf if no one desires to do them. Therefore, it is time to find the God-given desire and "engage in a new strategy that allows us all to Sing the Lord's song as we walk in this new land."

The financial report shows total investment of \$93 million, with only \$1.5 million unrestricted. The rest of the money is restricted to parish trusts and support ministries. Last year the Diocese was able to support 34 parishes with insurance relief money.

The financial aspects of the Diocese are currently like a plowed field. As Rev. Dr. Stephen McClatchie stated, "much work has been done and made progress in better supporting parishes and budgets financially, and there are more changes as the Diocese strives to be better stewards of the resources allotted." It is noted that rising insurance rates are the concern of many parishes, which is acknowledged and being discussed in the Diocese of Huron.

Synod appointed the Venerable Tanya Phibbs as Secretary-Treasurer of the Diocese of Huron effective May 29, 2023 and Bishop Todd appointed Rev. Dr. Stephen McClatchie as Archdeacon, Episcopal Office effective July 15, 2023.

The Bishop's charge can be summed up as simply "saying 'yes' to Jesus," but it does go deeper to remind the Diocese of Huron that God's call since the beginning of time has been to journey in a new land. This can now look like the challenge of helping the church be an intercultural and intergenerational place for folks of all kinds to worship God and Christ, who journeyed through many new lands as he sang the Lord's song. One culture and generation will fade, but God is present and looking to be with all who call Jesus Lord.

"Let's anchor our vision in the 2050s and commit to putting building blocks in place that will serve the Anglican church in 2050, here in Huron", concluded Bishop Todd.

The Indigenous Ministries of Huron stood and echoed Bishop Todd's call as they reported on the work being done in the area of reconciliation. This has also looked like tilling soil as they have broken the ground to see how terms such as "mission" and

"missionary" carry a heavy burden in Indigenous communities. The presentation was about opening these terms wider to acknowledge the communities' pain caused by "a set of well-intentioned, but ultimately flawed people", and leave room for future interpretations as they led to God's purpose.

Speakers – Ven. Rosalyn Elm and Rev. Hana Scorrar – challenged the Diocese of Huron to accept the position that a church best serves God when it is Gospel centered, allowing the community to grow around the Gospel and be grown by the Gospel; rather than forcing a community to bend to a church image and culture. It is for not replacing one's identity but inculturating the Gospel. Hence, God is present in the lives of all who choose God, not just those who choose a settler's way of life. The important transformation highlighted was moving from settler to sojourner in that all people are journeying together and side by side rather than dominating one over the other.

Bishop Lusa echoed this as he spoke of diversity in the church and at the table.

"These changes and conversations are hard," he stated, "because they are not neutral but very passionate discussions." His vision of the world, represented in the image of Jesus hosting everyone – in which everyone inside and outside a church is a guest – left a deep impact and led to much discussion and excitement around the room.

Bishop Lusa encouraged the Diocese of Huron to find hope in the cracks of history so that the future may be built on hope and knowledge. This is how we move towards a diverse church singing the Lord's song and entering this new land.

Synod resolved to amend the following canons: 3, 12,16, 18, and 28. Canon 29 was amended with a language change as well as a modification being made to the original motion for Canon 12.

Synod also confirmed the elections of the Deanery Councils of the nominations to membership of the Diocesan Council for the coming Synod year 2023-2024.

There was time given to remember the closed church buildings this past year. Afterwards, PWRDF Huron, Safe Church and Camp Huron gave presentations regarding their ministry and shared how they have seen Christ in their mission for the past few years. Each mission is shown to be fruitful in its teachings and calling.

A video presentation was shared for those clergy who were retiring or had retired this past year to thank them for all their contributions, and it will be celebrated further in June.

Thankfulness was shared around those who made this year's Synod possible, and at 5:01 PM, the meeting for the 183rd Synod was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted by:*

*Charlotte Toyne, a postulant in the Diocese of Huron.*