



Anglican
Diocese of
Ottawa

Summary of the 141st Session of the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

The 141st Session of the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa was built on themes of unity, change and renewal.

“We are in a moment where the past we have known is giving way to a future we must give shape to,” Bishop Shane Parker said in his charge to the diocese at the Synod Eucharist, adding “we must trust that God the Holy Spirit is already in our future; we must be confident and faithful as we move forward—knowing there will be joy and challenge in our work together.”

Bishop Shane said the pandemic has shown us our ability to be resilient and determined. Those strengths, he said, will carry us through the difficult work of being the generation that must reshape the structures (physical and administrative) within which we do our work, and the ways we engage with the broader community – all changes we know are underway and must prepare for, even if we cannot yet fully comprehend their impact.

Bishop Shane then reviewed where we are on the strategic priorities he laid out for the diocese at last year’s Synod. The diocesan Communications Panel has developed a strategic plan and worked with a professional agency to rebrand the diocese through a new design for corporate communication products.

The new brand (presented at the virtual Synod session held Saturday) shows the character of our diocesan church is “vibrant, innovative, open, compassionate and faithful,” the bishop said, adding that the logo shows “we are a people of the resurrection...who radiate and receive the vibrant diversity of creation—a people who trust the Holy Spirit is with and around us.”

The second strategic priority is the “Shape of Parish Ministry,” a diocesan-wide review and assessment of our ministry and buildings. Its first stage is complete: consulting with and developing profiles of every parish in



the diocese. The next stage focuses on analysis of what those profiles have to tell us about how our diocese should look and operate in the years to come. Concrete proposals about what buildings we need and how to deliver ministry will be presented at next year's Synod.

Work has begun on the next two priorities, engagement with the world and lifelong learning, Bishop Shane said. The governance structure of the diocese is being rethought to bring it line with our commitments to build partnerships with other groups but also to increase our ability to educate ourselves “and be better equipped to serve as a minority in a diverse and plural world.” Part of that is Project Anti-Racism, a mandatory awareness and capacity building program for clergy, managers in community ministries and senior staff so they can bring that knowledge to every ministry.

The keynote speaker at Synod was Rev. Canon Dr. John Gibaut, the diocese's canon theologian, who talked about the evolution of diocesan churches and what it means to be part of one. Using a metaphor he developed for teenagers when he worked at the World Council of Churches, Dr. Gibaut likened a diocese to a cell phone, where the diocese is the operating system and what we do are the cool apps. Just as with a phone, people tend to focus on the apps, which they can see, more than the operating system in the background. He concluded by quoting (and slightly expanding) something Bishop Shane said in his charge: “Our diocese, not the diocese. We, not they. Our bishop, not the bishop. Every parish is ours. Every community ministry is ours. We are in communion with one another, deeply and inextricably. And it all belongs to God in Christ Jesus.”

After a break, the meeting continued with the business matters before Synod. Chancellor Henry Schultz introduced a series of motions changing details, but not the substantial direction, of some diocesan canons. They included modifying details of episcopal elections, introducing a system for setting the bishop's salary and benefits and defining duties of associate incumbent priests. There were also “housekeeping” changes, either formalizing practices never properly included in our systems, or modifying or eliminating others. All passed by the required 2/3 majority



votes of lay members of Synod and clergy. By-laws to support the changes were passed as well.

The next item was the report of Sanjay Grover, the Director of Financial Ministries who took the meeting through the 2020 financials. Mr. Grover said a difficult year had been made easier with the support of the federal government's pandemic relief programs. With their help, the overall drop in diocesan revenue has been kept below 20 per cent, which is better than many Anglican dioceses across the country have done. The subsidies, however, have been discontinued. "We'll be making a decision early in the new year about supporting parishes, but hopefully, with things starting to open up again, we'll be doing better both at the parish level and for the diocese," Mr. Grover said.

Brian Cameron, the chair of the Diocesan Communications Panel outline plans for commemorating the 125th anniversary of our diocese. Uncertainty over the pandemic led to a mix of in-person and virtual events, focused on looking forward. There will be a four-part lecture series: the first lecture on Indigenous issues in December will be given by Michelle Good, the author of *Five Little Indians*, which won the Governor-General's Award for English fiction in 2020. Liturgically, we'll celebrate with a special service on New Year's Day, with our Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls.

Finally, diocesan elections were held.