



The 164th Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal

The Bishop's Charge

June 17, 2023

We acknowledge with respect that this Anglican Diocese of Montreal is on the unceded traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabeg and the Abenaki and that our Diocesan offices are in Tiotiake (Montreal), a meeting place for many. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. May God our Creator guide us in wisdom, justice and peace.

Welcome to the 164th Synod of this Diocese. We meet together today, in the presence of God, to do the work of Synod; to receive reports of the past year, to listen to ideas and concerns for the coming year, and to discern together where to go forward and what we must leave behind. Much of that work is contained in the Convening Circular, and each of us brings our own individual experience and insights. Thank you for your presence today; for your commitment to your particular area of ministry, and to our ministry together as the Diocese of Montreal. Thank you to all of you who submitted reports and statistics so that we might have a better picture of our work.

Our diocese continues to evolve and change and that can be a bumpy road at times. The pandemic has been declared to be officially over and we are now living with the aftermath. I am not the only person who has observed that God has used the last three years to challenge and change us. Some congregations have become stronger and have adapted well to the challenges of the last three

years, and others are still trying to recover. Still others have realized that their mission cannot continue in that place. Over our history as a diocese, congregations have waxed and waned, opened, closed, and moved locations. Yet, wherever there are disciples of Christ, followers of the Jesus way, there ought to be some kind of ministry taking place for the glory of God.

Our theme for Synod continues the important work that we have been doing on facing and tackling racism. If we are serious about the work of this church, and want to contribute to it, we will have to spend some time repenting of our own complicity, of our fear and prejudice of the other, of our judgement of those who are different from us, of our lack of love and compassion. We will have to ask God to soften our hearts and heal us so that we can be suitable for his service.

I have been praying for renewal and revival in our diocese and I firmly believe that our mission in this Diocese of Montreal is far from over. What is very clear is that we are no longer called to serve only those who are already Anglicans and from our particular tribes and languages! All around us there are people whose lives could be blessed by our communities. There are people who need a loving and caring community of faith and hope; with people who live in daily contact with Jesus and are instruments of his grace and mercy and healing. Today's gospel reading from Matthew is a reminder that the harvest needs labourers who are prepared for the challenges they will face. Are you up for the challenge?

This challenge is a worldwide challenge. The Lambeth Conference finally met in Canterbury last summer, with 635 bishops and 465 spouses from 160 countries. It was an amazing chance to meet with colleagues from all over the world and to share in the theme of *"God's Church for God's World"*. As when any large, extended family gathers, there were inevitably tensions, hurt feelings, and some people who didn't want some of the other parts of the family to be present. Nevertheless, in spite of these well-publicized difficulties and barriers, new friendships were formed and old ones were strengthened. Many of us grew past some of our suspicions and found that our friendship with Christ is indeed the foundation in which we can find ourselves in one family and learn to listen to and respect one another.

The bishops met daily in small groups for Bible study and discussion and so did the spouses. Many of those groups will continue to meet online for the next phase of the Lambeth Conference: discussing the Lambeth Calls as they were reworked after our feedback and preparing to share them in our dioceses. My group of bishops comes from: Waipu, New Zealand; Fredericton, New

Brunswick; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Leeds, England; and Boga in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Finding a suitable time zone is a puzzle but we seem to have found one time of day when it is not the middle of the night for any one of us!

The first Lambeth Call that we will focus on is the one on Discipleship. Beginning with the bishops, we are invited “to commit ourselves to learn and learn again the living, liberating and life-giving way of Jesus Christ in every aspect of our lives, through prayer, Word and sacrament, with the strength that God supplies, so that our following of him may be renewed by the Holy Spirit and that the people of our dioceses may be encouraged to do the same.”

Around the Anglican Communion, and across the World Council of Churches, there has been a call to discipleship. Pope Francis has called on all God’s people to become “missionary disciples”. Too often the church has been content with nominal Christians, people who have not really engaged in learning and relearning how to follow Christ. The Lambeth Call on Discipleship notes that some Christian commitment is one mile wide and one inch deep! You have heard me talk about intentional discipleship many times before, from when the Anglican Consultative Council launched a season of Intentional Discipleship in Lusaka in 2016. The Lambeth Call invites Anglicans to be formed by the Anglican Communion’s Five Marks of Mission as a Rule of Life – as habits or a framework to build our life as disciples.

This past year, the Anglican Church of Canada developed Five Transformational Aspirations as part of its strategic planning initiative and these will be presented at General Synod, which meets in Calgary at the end of this month. I commend them to you as spiritual practices as we seek to train our lives as Christ’s disciples. In all that we do, we can look at whether the following apply:

- Invites and deepens life in Christ
- Champions the dignity of every human being; works to dismantle racism and colonialism
- Embraces mutual interdependence with the Indigenous church (Sacred Circle)
- Nurtures right relationship among people of faith in local, national and global communities and networks
- Stewards and renews God's creation: protects and sustains the earth; pursues justice for all

Whatever framework we use to guide us in our discipleship, it is important to be intentional. We have so many resources already available in our diocese, from EFM (Education For Ministry) to Revive, to Alpha, to Spiritual Direction, Bible Study groups, prayer fellowships, outreach groups, online courses at the Diocesan College, and more. A Natural Church Development study of your congregation will help you notice where you are strong and where more growth or change is needed. An Environics study of our area will tell you about who lives around your church building. Some stewardship work will help orient your hearts around the generosity of God and the faithfulness of your own response. There are many opportunities for parishes to learn about themselves and to become more ready for the mission that is particular to their locale and that uses their strengths; but none of this will be of use if there are no disciples in the house!

This year I want to invite everyone to join me in a year of spiritual renewal, of intentional discipleship, of deepening our commitment to Christ, and of discerning ways to reach out into God's world in his love. I want to challenge everyone to take on one spiritual renewal activity in your parish – and invite me to attend!

We are being invited to be people who live by a Rule of Life, who listen to the call of Christ, who practice being attentive to Christ's impulses every day and who are open to being transformed.

At this year's Synod, we have the opportunity to commit ourselves to reducing the damage that we humans have done to God's creation. The Stewardship of the Environment Committee is challenging us to try to make our church buildings stop producing greenhouse gas emissions. We are very fortunate to live in a place where we can stop creating fossil fuel pollution, and in most cases save money while doing so. I am very excited by the response of several congregations so far and I urge you to get involved.

Some people have suggested that the trends show that the church is dying and will soon disappear. While the church is shifting from its old patterns of elitism and colonialism, I see signs of new life and new commitment. Our attendance has grown over the last five years – and I don't mean just with Facebook views of live streams! Several congregations are showing growth over five years. Another encouraging trend is that identified givings are steady overall after the pandemic, although up in some congregations and down in others.

Whether church continues as we know it or not, I believe that we are still called to be disciples and followers of Jesus and to invite others into life and ministry in his company.

I want to underline the importance of meeting and worshipping and studying together in person, even if some people still prefer to wear masks. Watching a recorded service does not build Christian community or grow disciples in the same way. It keeps shut-ins connected when they can't be there but it is a poor substitute to being there in person. I remain grateful that congregations could meet on Zoom when there was no alternative. I am grateful that we saw the fruit of relationships being built and sustained as people interacted with one another. Meaningful interaction and discipling are missing with recorded services.

Since our last Synod, we have welcomed the following new clergy to the Diocese:

- Bishop Ogé Beauvoir and his wife Serette in July 2022
- The Rev. Trevor Potter and his wife Kim and their three children in Sept 2022
- The Rev. Heather Liddell in January 2023
- Fr. Emmanuel Saint-Hilaire and his wife Lorry, June 1st 2023.

We have also had retirements:

- The Rev. Deacon Jason Crawford retired April 2022
- The Rev. Linda Faith Chalk retired August 2022
- The Rev. Sinpoh Han retired August 2022
- The Ven. Archdeacon Jim Bennett retired August 2022
- The Rev. Lorne Eason retired December 2022
- Mary (Maria) Abate served as my Episcopal secretary and retired at the end of April 2023.

We bid farewell:

- The Rev. Nick Forte moved to the Diocese of Ottawa in January 2023
- The Rev. Dr. Heather McCance, will be moving to Nova Scotia this summer to become the new President of the Atlantic School of Theology as of August 2023
- The Rev. Jean Daniel Ó Donnáda is now serving as intentional interim regional minister for Canada for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ and leaves his ministry at St. Martha's Chapel at the end of June 2023.

General Synod will be meeting in Calgary at the end of this month (June 27th to July 3rd) and part of it will be in Assembly with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, with whom we are in full communion. At the last Council of General Synod meeting this spring, it was announced that the Anglican Award of Merit is being given to Dion Lewis (All Saints by the Lake, Dorval) and Elizabeth Hutchinson (Grace Church, Arundel) for their exemplary service to the church. We are so proud of them! Congratulations to Dion and Elizabeth and thank you to those who nominated them. Our Primate, the Most Rev. Linda Nicholls will be coming to their parishes to present the awards in person.

This year, the following people will receive the Bishop's Award:

- Hardy Craft of St. James, Bedford
- Ann Cumyn, St. George's, Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue
- Vivian Lewin of Christ Church Cathedral
- Elizabeth Hutchinson of Grace Church, Arundel

Congratulations and thank you to these faithful and hard-working people and to those who nominated them. The award will be presented in their home church at a suitable time.

Following recommendations from the Anti-Racism Task Force, we're looking at making the space on the 2nd floor of Cathedral Place more diverse and welcoming. Many different groups use our facilities and we would like to add some images that express the diversity of who we are as a Church. We are thinking about creating an honor wall on which you could celebrate and commemorate living or recently-deceased Anglicans – of all ages – who have touched the hearts of people in our Diocese. Watch for more information about this initiative.

Many of you will remember when the Sisters of St. John the Divine lived and ministered in our Diocese, most recently in St. Lambert. A Canadian Anglican order of nuns, they have had a presence in Montreal, Edmonton, Victoria and Toronto, exercising ministries of hospitality and spiritual direction. For over 30 years, the sisters ran St. Michael's Mission themselves and were active in many other ways between 1920 and 1961 at the Church of St. John the Evangelist. They were also very present in the Diocese between 1998 - 2008 where they had a house of hospitality and mission in St. Lambert. Many sisters continue to have connections with people in our diocese.

The Guesthouse at their convent in Toronto is where most of their ministry is centered right now and the sisters have launched a capital campaign to make some necessary improvements and repairs to the guest facilities and the building infrastructure. Their welcoming ministry of prayer, retreats and spiritual direction, of discernment and companionship for ministry is a valuable resource and support to our church.

I am planning to make the Sisters of St. John the Divine one of the recipients of this year's Bishop's Action Appeal donations. I would be so happy, and so would the Sisters, if our Diocese is able to make a significant and generous contribution to their ministry. Thank you to all of you who have given so generously over the years, supporting our missions, the national church Giving with Grace and the Healing Fund, and our special projects like St. Catherine's Secondary School in Masasi, Tanzania, and helping to fund Fr. Linus Buriani's studies at McGill University and Montreal Dio.

This year we will also resume holding the Bishop's Dinner at the St. James Club. It is a fun evening to gather and raise funds for and hear from the missions we support. The date is set for November 16th. Tickets will go on sale in the fall. I hope that you will come.

Thank you to each of you, who are my colleagues in this ministry that Jesus Christ has given us in this place and in this time. Thank you for your courage and devotion. Thank you for your faithfulness and commitment to serving God, listening carefully for his call to you and to us. Thank you for rolling up your sleeves and doing the hard work of ministry, including attending Synod! May this coming year be one of renewal and deepening of discipleship in Christ's name.

Let us pray.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you have called and commissioned us
to tell the good news of your Kingdom,
to teach and nurture other Christians, to tend those in need,
to transform society and to treasure your creation.
Help us to be strong in the grace you have given us,
so that this call may become a rule of life
and we may acquire the habit of doing all these things
day by day and year by year. Amen.**