



The 159th Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal

The Bishop's Charge

June 16, 2018

We meet today on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe First Nations. We recognize that these lands are unceded. May God our Creator guide us in wisdom, justice and love.

This Synod is continuing the exercise of reflecting on what true reconciliation means to us, and how we can engage more deeply as Anglicans in the work of Truth and Reconciliation. I hope that we will walk away from this Synod with a better understanding of the issues we must face and of the circuitous and painful road towards healing and restoration.

My own journey towards reconciliation has included learning more about the stories and traditions of the first peoples, taking time to listen carefully to the various voices that are speaking. Practically speaking, it has meant learning to wait for the speaker, and not trying to be the one who fixes what has been broken for a long time.

Reconciliation will take much longer than some of us expect and it involves being in a relationship with people whose experiences and pain are difficult for us to hear about. The Anglican Healing Fund was established over 25 years ago in response to the on-going painful legacy of residential schools, as a way to support local, community-led projects that help with ongoing healing, recovery of culture and language. The work of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund in native communities is another practical contribution.

Our partnership relationship with The Territory of the People (Anglican Church) has given us yet another perspective on this journey and I am grateful for their

grace and fellowship in Christ as they journey along the reconciliation road toward wholeness. We welcome their Bishop, Barbara Andrews who is with us at Synod.

The Diocese of Masasi, Tanzania, has been in partnership with us, spanning ten years and two bishops in each diocese. I am pleased to be able to visit Masasi this summer. Bishop James Almasi has prepared a challenging itinerary for us, meeting many parishes and ministries in his diocese and learning about African hospitality. For my part, I am readying myself to say a few greetings in Swahili and to have a homily up my sleeve at all times. Bishop James has warned me to be prepared to talk, talk, talk!

Last fall I was very pleased to receive the visit of the Primate of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, Archbishop Suheil Dawani, accompanied by the executive of The Canadian Companions of Jerusalem, of which the Rev. Dr. Patricia Kirkpatrick is the chair. This is an important relationship with a struggling and Palestinian part of the Church where there is significant ministry to schools, hospitals and to the needy, and where the population of Anglicans is just a few thousand. Archbishop Suheil talked to us about “Why does the holy land matter?” Next February, I plan to lead a pilgrimage to the holy land and to visit the Christians in that place.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has notified us that the Lambeth Conference will be held in 2020. Normally held every ten years, this meeting of bishops from across the Anglican Communion was postponed from this year to enable the Primates to meet instead, and for them to discuss the things that have caused division and distrust in our Church. The Anglican Communion is not just a theoretical body, but it is a diverse fellowship of Anglicans around the world. We are gathered from our origins in England, but our cultures and contexts and opportunities vary enormously. Each of us is called to respond faithfully and authentically as we discern Christ’s call to us. I believe that we must work to love and support one another, united through all of our differences, in our common mission to serve Christ. By the time I get to Lambeth, I will have made friends with many bishops, from Canada, the USA, Cuba, Brazil, Zululand, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jerusalem, Tanzania and from many other places around the world. These individual encounters are important in building relationships and in uniting us in our common mission and love for our Lord Jesus Christ and for God’s work in the world.

We have welcomed several newcomers to the Diocese. The Rev. Dr. Jesse Zink and his wife the Rev. Deborah Noonan arrived at the end of the summer. Jesse is the new Principal of the Montreal Diocesan Theological College and many of you will have met him already. In January, the Rev. Nick Forte came from the Diocese of Quebec to be the incumbent of Chateauguay. Our new Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, the Very Rev. Bertrand Olivier joined us in February.

This weekend the Cathedral will be celebrating the rich ministry of Mr. Patrick Wedd who has served as organist and music director for 22 years. As part of a gala celebration, the Stravinsky Mass will be featured in a concert tonight at 7:30pm, on Sunday at 10am and at Evensong at 4pm, followed by a reception/farewell party. Patrick's leadership has extended to the whole Diocese and throughout the Anglican Church of Canada in our Common Praise Hymn Book. We wish him every blessing in his retirement.

I want to extend my thanks to the Rev. Nick Pang for his work as Ecumenical Officer and for his leadership in the Diocese, most recently in the Laurentian Regional Ministry. Nick will be leaving us to become Incumbent Priest of St. Saviour's, Penticton beginning August 1st. We send him with our prayers and blessing.

The Ven. Pamela Yarrow has served as Archdeacon of St. Lawrence with passion and creativity. She will retire this summer. I am grateful for her hard work and leadership in the archdeaconry in looking at faithful ways to continue to minister into the future and in her parish of St. Barnabas, Pierrefonds as they have worked toward redevelopment of their property and the construction of a healthy church building.

I am pleased to appoint the Rev. Michelle Eason, incumbent of St. Michael and all Angels Church, to take up this important work as Archdeacon of St. Lawrence, sharing in my episcopal responsibilities.

Two priests were ordained this year for non-stipendiary ministry, the Rev. Jane Bell in November and the Rev. Terry Hidichuk last month on Trinity Sunday. Jane's work is mainly in the Laurentians and Terry is working at St. Matthias. This is an important help to the Church where resources are limited.

The Rev. Grace Burson will be arriving from New Hampshire to be the incumbent of the newly formed Parish of the Resurrection and St. Andrew and St. Mark on August 1st.

Our Primate, The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz will resign at the end of General Synod next July. He hopes to take up some work in a parish for a few years. Before all that, he wants to meet with the members of the Anglican Church of Canada and listen to the heartbeat of the Church. We were privileged to have him at the Convocation of the Montreal Diocesan Theological College. Dio awarded him an Honorary Doctorate and he spoke to the members of the Corporation of Dio. Archbishop Fred will be joining us at Clergy Conference this fall and I hope that we can find some opportunities for others to meet with him that week before he returns home. Perhaps you were able to watch him on Facebook live when Lee Ann Matthews interviewed him the day after Dio's convocation.

In July 2019, General Synod will hear the second reading of a motion to amend the Marriage Canon, changing the wording to make provision for same sex marriages. The church has been asked to read the material prepared for General Synod 2016 and to discuss it. Not everyone has done so and we want to find the most gracious and generous way forward in this matter. We will have an opportunity to discuss this (ourselves) in this Synod.

I am pleased to announce that this year's recipients of the Bishop's Awards are:

John Richard, Holy Trinity Ste. Agathe, Laurentian Regional Ministry,
Archdeaconry of St. Andrews

John Richard and his wife Sandra have been devoted and faithful members of Holy Trinity Church in Ste-Agathe since 1985. Over the years, John has worn many hats including leading youth groups. He is the People's Warden and has shown exemplary performance in this position. He has a positive and wonderful attitude.

Retired from his position as a teacher, John gives much of his time to Holy Trinity as a warden, on the LRM management team, producing weekly bulletins, planning the Annual Vestry meetings, building and grounds management, and taking any and all responsibility of the day to day needs of the church. In addition, he is part of the Clarke Cemetery Committee, which is separate from Holy Trinity.

He prioritizes tasks, is a great listener and responds in a positive affirming manner. John has dedicated great care and consideration to Holy Trinity and LRM.

Alexander Montgomery, St. Paul's Anglican Church Philipsburg, Regional

Ministry of Bedford & Stanbridge East, Archdeaconry of Bedford & the Richelieu

Alexander (Sandy) Montgomery has been a long-time member of Synod, representing the Parish of Bedford, Philipsburg. He is currently deanery representative to Diocesan Council for Bedford, Brome-Shefford. Sandy has served faithfully as Rector's Warden and Treasurer. He assists with worship as a reader, teacher and preacher.

He is also a member of the cemetery board to ensure the long-term maintenance of the cemetery. He has also gifted St. Paul's with land next to the cemetery. Sandy is a member of Lake Champlain Committee responsible for improving the health of the lake and is also a field guide of the George H. Montgomery Bird Sanctuary, named for his father. He sits on the Advisory board for Journal St. Armand and is former town councillor for Philipsburg. He is also past board member of Batshaw Youth and Family Services.

Sandy's strength of character, integrity, thoughtfulness and prayerfulness are a great help to the ministry of St. Paul's and to the wider community.

Gladys Randle, Church of the Resurrection, now Parish of the Resurrection, and St. Andrew, St. Mark, Dorval, Archdeaconry of St. Lawrence

Gladys Randle was married in the Parish and had her children baptized there. Over the years she has been involved in every part of Parish life, from convening the Christmas Bazaar for 40 years, to serving as a Deputy Warden, Safe Church Coordinator, and head of the Maintenance Committee. Even in her 80's, Gladys has great tenacity and energy. Most recently Gladys was part of the Way Forward Committee that wrote up Recommendations concerning the merger between the Resurrection and the Parish of St. Andrew's and St. Paul's, Dorval. Even though it broke her heart to leave her beloved building, she strongly supported the merger. Gladys personally knows about 95% of the people on Resurrection's Parish list, and is in constant contact with all parishioners who are sick or in need. She is known for her many acts of kindness, coordinates the visits we make to the Seniors Center, is an active chorister every Sunday, has a gift for hospitality and for organization of people and events, and is the food coordinator for our developing "Messy Church".

Ann Elbourne, Christ Church Cathedral, Archdeaconry of Montreal

Ann is a long time parishioner of the Cathedral, working two days a week in the office and doing everything from copying bulletins to archives. She writes a

weekly newsletter of the happenings at the Cathedral.

Over the last few years she has headed up teams of people to put on events so that we participate in Nuit Blanche and Journée du la culture. This has allowed not only the Cathedral to be known but also the diocese and the Anglican Church in Montreal. Ann sees these two events as a way of having people get to know what we as Anglicans do here. She is an evangelist of the faith in her own way and is determined that all of Montreal should come and be welcomed into the Cathedral for a service, an event or hot chocolate.

Congratulations to these recipients and thank you to all who sent in nominations.

I want to end this summary of the year by paying tribute to those who surround me and help me in this ministry as your bishop. The staff at Synod office each bring their particular strengths and gifts and I am grateful to them for their loyalty and hard work and for the passion they bring to supporting the ministry and mission of our diocese. Archdeacon Robert Camara is a gifted priest with a great heart and much wisdom and I am blessed to have him working in our office.

So where do we go from here? How are we to head into the future? Why are we here? What is the future for the Diocese of Montreal?

Our core business is to be the Church. Heritage buildings and community centers and ministries to the poor are all good things – and part of the halo effect of a Christian community in a neighbourhood. But our core business – what distinguishes us from others – is to be people who share the good news of Jesus Christ. What that looks like will vary from place to place but the Church cannot exist without disciples – people who are committed to Jesus and who follow and obey Him as Lord.

We need to avoid the temptation of mission drift, of thinking that there is nothing left but to do good deeds in the community.

If we are to have any kind of ministry and presence into the future, we need to keep making disciples – and growing as disciples ourselves! And we need to steward the resources and heritage that has been entrusted to us; to keep investing our own gifts and resources: our own money and energy, our buildings, our vocation as Christians, in other words, “our selves, our souls and bodies, as a reasonable, holy and living sacrifice”!

Beginning this year, the clergy are being asked to complete a self-evaluation as a regular examination of their ministry. Along with the team at the Diocesan offices, I want to support our clergy in the work that they are doing and enter into a regular dialogue that encourages communication, mutual support and shared goals. I want to be in regular communication with you, understanding the challenges you see, the opportunities you've identified and helping to put your best gifts to use in this diocese.

My hope for our Diocese is that we will have communities of vital, missional, energized and inspiring followers of Jesus Christ who are invested in being God's agents of transformation, renewal and hope. That is the foundation of our baptismal covenant. As we grow in faith, we will hear the Spirit of God calling us to share that faith where it is needed. And we will be refreshed in the hope which called us. Each of us is called to serve Christ and to put our whole self in and to invest in God's kingdom.

Some of us have communities of faith which have stalled or are dormant. They seem to have lost their mission and their passion to serve Christ. Without a sense of mission and passion, no one wants to invest financially. This can be very discouraging. I invite your prayers for God's purposes for them. Pray for renewal and for the fire of the Holy Spirit. If you feel that your parish is in this situation, I invite you to come and discuss with me the future of your mission.

I believe that there are new opportunities awaiting those who sincerely pray for inspiration. There will also be changes and endings, which we will find difficult. We may have buildings in locations that no longer have a community with a mission or passion to be the Church in that place. I do not believe that it is faithful to the whole Diocese to carry along every building when it is not needed. Neither is it faithful to eat up endowments or to budget deficits without a serious plan, strategy and renewed hope to get out of that situation.

Assigning fewer priests to more and more congregations is only a palliative move and not motivating for the clergy or sustainable for the long haul – and I do not believe that it helps to grow missional communities. How can we have viable and affordable ministry taking place? What do we have to do to get there? I invite your responses.

The West Island is only one of the places where there is ongoing pressure to grow or merge weaker parishes so that we can have strong and vital ministry. I am calling for each of our ministry areas to pray and work for new growth in

new ways, to learn again, perhaps in new, merged configurations, how to grow vibrant communities who reach out to serve and make disciples of the people in their area.

It is our fiduciary responsibility to steward every resource that God has given us so that the church continues beyond our own lives. The endowments that some congregations currently enjoy and sometimes overuse are a testimony to the generosity and vision of past donors. What do we (– you, I and our friends in the pew beside us –) plan to leave for the future?

There are many good resources designed to deepen and develop Christian communities – Alpha, Natural Church Development, Education for Ministry, Stewardship Education – and help is available in developing an understanding of our mission in a particular place. Some people have begun Messy Church in order to reach families. Others are trying out various other approaches such as Supper Club, house churches, or “The Cathedral at Six pm”.

Each ministry setting has its opportunities. There is no longer one uniform way. We need to be moving past the idea that one size fits all. Times have changed but our call to follow Jesus and serve him has not.

Ministry in what is now the Diocese of Montreal was begun as a mission field where people with a heart and passion for Christ were sent from England by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. They began with very little seed money and lived in difficult conditions.

I hope that we will be inspired to be the kind of disciples that Christ wants to send out to take up a challenge. May we be empowered to do so by the Holy Spirit. May we find courage to listen for God’s voice for us today, and to say ‘Yes’!

+Mary Irwin-Gibson