



The 161th Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Montreal

The Bishop's Charge,

November 14, 2020

We acknowledge with respect that this Diocese of Montreal is on the unceded traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe and the Wabenaki people and that our Diocesan offices are in Tiotiake, 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.

In June 2019 when we last met at Diocesan Synod, we looked at the topic chosen for the next triennium: *The Challenges of Evangelism: What are we inviting people to?* We are continuing to think about that theme this year. We may have different insights now, in the light of the many changes that have been brought about for us since the global pandemic of Covid-19 was declared in March. No doubt we even can identify new challenges that did not come to mind last year. Thank you to Dr. Domenic Ruso for being our speaker at this online Synod and for inspiring us to say yes to the ways of Jesus in our lives, to step out in faith and to be fully alive. Thank you also to the Synod Planning Committee for their hard work organizing a Synod that had to adapt to meeting online.

Just as Lent was about to begin, I wrote that I was fasting and praying for revival and renewal in our Diocese, and I invited everyone to pray with me for God to renew and grow our church. I thank you if you took up the challenge to join me in prayer. There's an old joke that I've seen that has a person praying, "O God, please make something happen that is not in the bulletin." Who could have predicted how our church would change some of its ways! The predictability of church life and church services has certainly been interrupted by this pandemic!

Yet I believe that the Diocese of Montreal has seen some amazing and wonderful changes and opportunities that would have been hard to predict. Is it just possible that God has been using this time to renew and grow the Church, too?

Because our church services had to move online, I have observed that some wonderful outreach and discipleship training have taken place. People have been able to attend church services and gather in groups online for study or fellowship or committee meetings when so many impediments previously existed. Barriers like age, infirmity, and distances to travel have melted away. Who knew that it was possible to meet without being in the same room? I recognize that some have been dragged into the age of Internet competencies who had hoped to avoid it in their lifetime. It has been intense and challenging work for our leaders, sometimes much more demanding than in-person meetings, as we have had to learn new ways to use equipment and make presentations.

EFM (Education for Ministry), Alpha, Revive, Lay Readers' trainings, Bible studies and clergy conferences, these are some of the course offerings that have been available online. On Sundays in the Eastern Townships, 80 people gather regularly for worship and fellowship on Zoom when individual congregations were often 5 to 10. Other platforms like Facebook and YouTube have enabled congregations to take part in worship and share the access with their friends. If a parish was not able to use the Internet to meet, church services by telephone conference calls or recorded on YouTube have had an impressive and satisfying reach. Two congregations that I know of meet for worship on a telephone conference call. L'Église de la Nativité meets by telephone on UberConference, with 80 telephone numbers (120-130 people) regularly taking part in the service from all over Montreal, from Florida and Haiti, and beyond. This parish holds meetings and Bible studies by telephone and had over 100 connections for worship on Easter Day! A few churches have simply emailed readings, collects and a sermon to their congregations. All of these have been according to their means and abilities.

Many churches have become more competent and creative in receiving and promoting online giving. Some others, like St. Barnabas, Pierrefonds, have used "traditional" but effective methods such as visits by the wardens to each parishioner in order to collect their offerings. In fact, during this time, with the leadership of their incumbent, the Rev. Dorothy Samuel, St. Barnabas has been able to wipe out a significant debt to the Diocese! Congratulations and well done!

We were pleased to be able to arrange for the ordination of two priests, the Rev. Tyson Røsborg and the Rev. Joel Amos with only the minimum number in

attendance in the summer, and for the ordination of two deacons, the Rev. Susan Searle and the Rev. Debrah Galt in the autumn with small congregations of under 25 people.

In March, the decision was made in consultation with Diocesan Council and the Finance Committee, to not collect parish assessments from April until October and to weather a financial loss. I wish to announce that, it has been further decided not to charge any parish assessments for the rest of the year, so as to continue to extend help to the parishes in this extraordinary time. Assessments will resume in full in January 2021.

While we have sheltered in our homes and tried to limit the spread of this virus, many people have been nourished and strengthened in their faith. Domenic Ruso reminds us that we need to grow the fire in our own hearts before we take that warmth and love and faith and share it with others. Our life as a church and as followers of Jesus has to be more than simply looking for a safe harbour to recover from the challenges of our own lives – we are called to look to Jesus and to follow where he leads; to be disciples and not just private consumers of grace.

As we think about what our Diocese may look like after the pandemic, we need to be praying for God's will in all of this. What kind of church does God want us to be? We cannot let our fears control our prayers and our imaginations for how God's power can work in us. Nor can we allow petty jealousies or feelings of superiority or individuality to keep us playing a spiritual version of the game *Survivor*. As you consider the future of your congregation, invite Jesus to be in charge, to direct your ministries, to make you stop some things and take up others, to be Lord of this place and this time and to make you disciples "for such a time as this". Agree to step out in faith into the unknown.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is calling us to pray for one another and for those outside our circles and comfort zones. We are to be working as the friends and servants of Jesus, on the lookout for where we find him and figuring out how we can serve Him and share his love and grace with the people we meet and with one another. This may also involve our repenting of the ways we have judged others in our Diocese. Too often we get caught up with housekeeping concerns, with our consumer mentality that wants things our own way and on our own time schedule. Life in this time of pandemic has been a difficult school for many of us, and yet God has clearly been at work in our Diocese and has been moving us out of our comfort zones.

New energy has appeared to work on anti-Black and systemic racism in our

church and in the wider society; on justice and respect for indigenous people; on fighting human trafficking; on feeding the hungry; on the need for a guaranteed basic income for the most financially fragile; on caring for and reaching out to immigrants and refugees; on campaigns for the health of mothers and children.

The Diocese of Montréal will soon launch a simple French web site with basic information. The site will have links to our French congregations, including a page for the “CMAQ—la Communauté multiculturelle anglicane du Québec”. This project will initiate French-language ministry to “les nouveaux arrivé(e)s” (newcomer Anglicans to Québec) using a virtual platform for at least as long as the pandemic lasts, and probably beyond.

This all began because of connections made when my husband Mark and I were guests of the Diocese of Québec at their Diocesan Synod last November, and it grew based on research done by the Rev. Thomas Ntilivamunda of the Diocese of Québec, Mark and several of our diocesan clergy (and a seminarian) with interests in this area.

I encourage Anglican members of our diocese with some skills in French to consider assisting in this outreach ministry. I expect this work will also strengthen our abilities and our presence in French at a time of growing openness to Christ, especially by younger Québécois.

I consider this to be one of the positive fruits of the COVID-19 lockdown, which is shaking us out of our comfortable habits!

Another positive fruit is a motion that is coming to Synod to ask that we become proactive in addressing systemic racism in our society and in our churches and that our diocese begin a year of training and repentance for it.

The Montreal Diocesan Theological College continues to prepare students for ordained ministry, both for us and for the wider church, and to enrich so many of us in the Diocese through the courses it offers online. It faces an uncertain future financially and we have been supporting the College in an effort to help. We have decided that the proceeds of the sale of St. Mark’s Church, Longueuil will be invested by the Diocese and the interest from it will be used to endow the office of the Principal of Montreal Dio.

The Partnership Committee has written a report that you can find in the convening circular, but I want to highlight and add a few things for you.

Bishop James Almasi of our international partner diocese has asked for our prayers as he deals with back ache and with the stresses from long travel. St. Catherine's Secondary School continues to be readied for when it can open. And I thank you so much for your gifts to the Bishop's action appeal last year. There is no widespread testing for Covid-19 in Tanzania but the Diocese of Masasi, helped by the Mother's Union, launched an awareness campaign about handwashing and physical distancing. Bishop James thinks that the virus is more prevalent in the large cities. The Partnership Committee is still working towards bringing a theological student from Masasi to study at Montreal Dio, but no firm plans are in place yet.

The Territory of the People, our Canadian partner diocese, elected their first Diocesan bishop, the Right Rev. Lincoln McKoen and our dear friend Bishop Barbara Andrews was able to retire after leading the Anglican Parishes of the Central Interior back to Diocesan status with a new name, identity and purpose. During that time, Bishop Barbara was a suffragan bishop to the Archbishop of the Province of British Columbia. I was delighted to be able to attend Barbara's final service where she laid down her pastoral staff on the altar, and Lincoln's consecration and seating, both online.

The Lambeth Conference, when bishops from around the Anglican Communion meet in Canterbury, was to have met this summer but it has been rescheduled for 2022. I continue to be in touch with bishops I met in 2017 when I went to the School for Bishops in Canterbury.

The Diocese of Montreal's has been extremely generous in its support of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF). From 2015-2019, members and groups in our Diocese have given an average of \$87,679 per year! Many of the funds that the PWRDF receives are also matched by government aid funds. Our Diocesan PWRDF Montreal group meets regularly, led by Ann Cumyn and the Rev. Roslyn Macgregor and I want to thank them both for their work. This year they have learned to meet online and Lee Ann Matthews helped them develop a Facebook site. They continue to support the All Mothers and Children Count campaign (pwrdf.org/amcc/). I want to thank all of you who so generously and prayerfully support the work of the PWRDF and encourage you to learn more at pwrdf.org.

On November 1, 2020, I announced the New Archdeacon of St. Andrew's, the Venerable Victor David Mbuyi Bipungu. Victor David is the incumbent of La Nativité - St. James, Rosemère and also of St. Simon and St. Bartholomew's

Church in Chomedey. He succeeds Archdeacon Michael Robson who retired at the end of October and who has served our Diocese in many capacities, always with grace and generosity. Michael will continue to care for the parish of Rawdon part time for the time being and to be a member of the Partnership Committee. Thank you so much Michael for your ministry and service. I am also grateful to all who serve the Diocese and me on the Episcopal Council: Archdeacons James Bennett, Tim Smart, Michelle Eason, and Robert Camara, and Dean Bertrand Olivier.

Bishop's Awards

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

Jeff Alexander and Sophie Lanthier, All Saints, Deux Montagnes, Archdeaconry of St. Andrews

Anita Young, Saint Stephens with Saint James Anglican Church, Chambly Archdeaconry of South Shore/ Richelieu Bedford

Carol Johnson, St. John's, Huntington, Archdeaconry of St. Lawrence

Dr. Christopher Haslam, nominated by The Cathedral and The Bishop's Office.

More information on our recipients will soon be available on our web site. But I want to say a few words about Chris Haslam right now.

Since 1996, Chris has published weekly commentaries on the lectionary which have enriched not only the preachers of this Diocese, but have reached around the Anglican Communion. Chris and his wife Helen are currently members of All Saints by the Lake in Dorval. (See montreal.anglican.org/comments)

Later today, Mrs. Susan Winn will be awarded the Anglican Award of Merit by the Primate, the Most Rev. Linda Nicholls, who will join us online to make the presentation.

I want to thank all those who pray for me and help me in this ministry as your bishop. I am especially privileged to work with such a talented and committed staff at Synod office: Robert Camara, Maria Abate, Sophie Bertrand, Nicki Hronjak, Lee Ann Matthews, Jennifer James-Philips, Stephen Tam, Neil Mancor, Ardyth Robinson, Sandra Koukou and David Burnstun.

Together we are honoured to serve the Diocese of Montreal.

Let me end with a wonderful prayer which Bishop Bruce Myers read at his Synod last year. Written by the Rev. Eric Milner-White, who was an Anglican priest during the time of 1918 Spanish flu and the First and Second World Wars, this prayer has nourished me even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go forward with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O Dieu, tu as appelé tes serviteurs à des entreprises dont nous ne pouvons voir la fin, par des chemins encore inexplorés, à travers des périls inconnus. Donne-nous la foi pour avancer avec courage, sans savoir où nous allons, mais seulement que ta main nous guide et que ton amour nous soutienne ; par Jésus-Christ notre Seigneur.

Eric Milner Milner-White, OGS, CBE, DSO (1884 -1963)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Milner-White

Amen, Come Lord Jesus

+ Mary