

PARISH REPORT OF THE 127th SYNOD

We would like to take a few minutes to briefly tell you about the 127th Synod. This parish elected 5 members to attend, Ed Gadd, Julie Landgraff, Heather Colls, Sandy Pinhey and Lewis Kruger, In addition both our priests, Fathers John and Craig and also Canon Bill Prentice, Francis Christensen, Alan Fowler and Sarah Bowers attended.

The Synod opened at our cathedral with a Eucharist in which the Bishop gave his Charge, or in simple terms, what he expected to come out of Synod and his expectations for the future.

In his charge, the Bishop invited every parish to become familiar with the eight “Millennium Development Goals” set by the United nations in 2001 and to let those goals lead and focus our mission plans, both locally and internationally. As he spoke to this issue young people in the cathedral paraded down the aisles carrying placards for each of the goals. The goals are: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, Achieve universal primary education, Promote gender equality and empower women, Reduce child mortality, Improve maternal health, Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, Ensure environmental sustainability and Develop a global partnership for development.

The Bishop also reminded us that 2009 is the 50th anniversary of the Primates World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) and encouraged us to remind our congregations of the good works this organization undertakes. Our Diocese will be recognizing this special milestone with prayer and activities over the next year.

In his charge the Bishop also informed Synod that he intends to place before the next meeting of the Canadian House of Bishops the following statement for discussion:

“That we, in Ottawa, begin to explore experientially, the blessing of duly solemnized and registered civil marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized; to charge the Doctrine and Worship Committee with the responsibility to develop an appropriate rite for this blessing. Upon authorization of a rite, I will give my permission for one parish within the Diocese to offer the blessing of civil marriage between same-sex couples.”

The Bishop then went on to say “This hope is not and must not be understood as a conclusive statement affirming that the church must and ought to proceed with the blessing of same-sex civilly married couples.” The Bishop said that “this would be an initial step from which we can observe and learn” and “allow for a continuation of our discernment process”. Within one month, he “will make a conclusive statement to the Diocese regarding next steps”.

Issues which have relevance to this proposal are varied and include:

- 1. Bishop John stated that a legislative motion or decision regarding a moratorium on same-sex blessings has not yet been taken at Lambeth.**
- 2. A majority of the Bishops at the Lambeth Conference expressed a request that a moratorium be placed on the blessing of same-sex marriages. While Bishop John acknowledged that the majority of Bishops at Lambeth desired a moratorium, he noted that majority support for a moratorium was not evident if only a subset of countries was considered. The subset consisted of countries such as Canada, the US, South Africa, Brazil, Scotland, Ireland, the Congo plus other countries which he did not name.**
- 3. The previous Ottawa Synod in 2007 adopted a motion “requesting the Bishop grant permission for clergy, whose conscience permits, to bless duly solemnized civil marriages between same-sex couples, where at least one party is baptized: and that he authorize an appropriate rite and guideline for use in supportive parishes”.**
- 4. Several parishes (St. George’s and St. Alban’s) in the Diocese have voted to separate from our Diocese over, in part, the issue of same-sex blessings. The Bishop’s position over a separation was that parishes cannot leave the Diocese, only people can leave.**
- 5. A number of priests have decided to relinquish their standing in the Diocese over, in part, the issue of same-sex blessings.**

In order to more fully assess and understand the Bishop’s decision we would urge you access the Bishop’s Charge on the Diocesan website . A copy of the charge will be left in the parish office.

The business portion of Synod (Friday and Saturday) was held at the St. Elias Centre. There were 5 workshops and a number of presentations on actions which have arisen from the implementation of the strategic plan which was begun last year, presentations from ongoing activities of the Diocese and 3 addresses by Canon Dr. Douglas Leighton, a colleague of Bishop John. Dr Leighton is a Canadian Historian with Specialties in Canadian Church history and Canadian Aboriginal history.

In his addresses Dr Leighton talked about the nature of authority in the church and the development of the episcopacy in the Canadian Anglican Church. Dr Leighton posed a number of questions for us to take away from Synod and struggle with.

These included:

- 1. What is it that I really believe?**
- 2. How do I live my faith and live a life of integrity?**
- 3. What does it mean to be a person of faith in our society?**
- 4. How do you see the role and views of your Bishop?**
- 5. What does it mean to be a woman and an Anglican and to be a man and an Anglican? and**
- 6. What is it that attracts you to this denomination?**

Canon Bill Prentice and his group made presentations on the ongoing work of the 4 community ministries which our diocese supports: Cornerstone, The Well, the Anglican Social Services and the Ottawa Pastoral Counseling Services. These services contribute so much to help the marginalized, the abused and the poor of our community. All the leaders of these ministries stressed how being part of the Diocesan Family with its prayers and support meant so much to the success of their work which is so vital to making our community a better place. The presentations were all wonderfully informative and we can all be very proud of these ministries which are led by our own Canon Prentice. The Bishop said that this is one of the most significant ministries that the Diocese supports. With respect to the Community Ministries, the Diocese is embarking on an impressive new initiative, an Anglican Inuit Center. The intent is to provide spiritual, linguistic and cultural support and to build a housing development to be associated with St. Margaret's Church. For additional details have a chat with Canon Bill. In addition, in one of the workshops it was mentioned that Cornerstone is looking towards a larger shelter (70 beds from the current 52). This is much needed to actualize our Christian caring and compassion to such a disadvantaged and abused part of our society.

In another presentation we heard about the Diocesan Youth ministry and were introduced to the new Diocesan youth leader Andrew Stephens-Rennie. Andrew has only had several months in his new capacity and not enough time to initiate a youth Synod for this gathering but he seems to have boundless energy and wonderful ideas. In our opinion, this is one of, if not the most, critical ministries in the Diocese. We are certainly in very good hands.

Five workshops were offered at this Synod: Parish Growth and Renewal, Lay Leadership and Development, Growing Stewardship in Parishes, Social Justice Meets the Healing Gospel, and Parish Hospitality. Francis Christensen gave an excellent presentation on Stewardship, one of the strategic priorities. This was followed by the workshop "Growing Stewardship in Parishes" which was chaired by Francis and one of the five panelists was Sarah Bowers. Her presentation on the panel was rated as 9.9 out of a possible 10 by one of our unbiased Synod delegates. This was an excellent workshop and many valuable ideas were shared.

The last report which we would like to bring to your attention is the "2008 Governance Evaluation Report" which was prepared for the Governance Task Force by an external consultant. The report deals with a new model of Diocesan structure intended to greatly streamline and simplify the structure of the diocese. The Task Force has been given the green light to add flesh to the suggested new structure. A copy of this report is in the church office for those of you who would like more detailed information than can be offered in this short report.

The Diocese has now launched a new website, completely redesigned and user friendly, including features such as an interactive calendar for viewing and booking events. In conjunction with this, the Diocese has hired a full-time Communications Officer who will be responsible for dissemination of information from the Diocese to

the parishes and vice-versa. These two items were major initiatives in the Communications section of the Strategic Plan which Synod adopted last year.

We will leave several copies of this report at the back of the church and in the parish office.

Respectfully yours,

Ed Gadd Julie Landgraff Heather Colls Sandy Pinhey Lewis Kruger