



CREATED & RECREATED IN CHRIST

REGULAR SESSION OF SYNOD
2019

GENERAL SYNOD REPORT



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada



General Synod

The delegates to General Synod 2019 gathered on Coast Salish, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh Territory, in Vancouver, July 2019. We have put our reports in chronological order so you can walk through our days as we did.



Youth

The journey of General Synod began with the young people. A day and a half before General Synod began, youth delegates from across the country gathered for their pre-synod program. Over that time, they built community, learned the history of Turtle Island, walked a prayer labyrinth and worshipped together in an outdoor eucharist with the Salal and Cedar communities. They learned the ins and outs of how General Synod works to prepare for the week ahead.

The youth were blessed to be together not only at the beginning of synod but during synod to have a Q&A time with nominees for primate and lunch with the Archbishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East. They gathered together in free time and at mealtimes to work on motions around the climate crisis, support each other and build community. The community built in the pre-synod time is what got many through the hardest moments of the week.

The night of the vote on the marriage canon, the youth community checked in on each other, and many of the queer youth shared a room for the nights following. Their community was a connection that made sure all were safe when mental health spiralled.

The General Synod youth community has stayed in contact since heading home and when someone needs prayer support, it's their community they turn to. The youth are grateful to Sheilagh, the staff and volunteers who made the program possible. The friendships built within the youth program will last a lifetime.





Indigenous Ministries and Matters



It was a blessing to take significant, binding steps towards reconciliation within our institution, in the form of:

a) supporting in spirit and in principle the emerging church movement towards self-determination within the Anglican Church of Canada.

There are plans for the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples (ACIP) to call a Sacred Circle for next June 2020, to work together to begin to establish infrastructure.

- b) the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, with the guidance and encouragement of Indigenous elders, formally apologized for spiritual harm caused by the imposition of the colonial Church. See anglican.ca for the text.

This includes confession of sin in failure to acknowledge the humanity of our First Nations, Inuit and Métis siblings; confession of sin of our arrogance in dismissing Indigenous spiritualities and disciplines as incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus; and confession of the sin of robbing the children and youth of the opportunities to know their spiritual ancestry and the great wealth of its wisdom and guidance for living in a good way with the Creator, the land, and all peoples.

- c) binding steps towards reconciliation in the form of acknowledging the role and responsibilities of our National Indigenous Bishop, and in a historic vote, bestowed the title Archbishop upon Mark MacDonald.

Canon XXI

The discussion of the amendment to the canon on marriage was a difficult time at synod. The amendment would explicitly allow for same-gender marriage in church. Delegates knew that however the vote went, there would be hurt – not just disappointment – spread around.

CoGS provided “A Word to the Church” – five understandings of where the Church’s perceptions were. One recognized that Indigenous people will make their own decisions on this in their own time. A second recognized that some dioceses felt that the unamended canon does not forbid same-gender marriage. Those five understandings were passed by General Synod by 85%.

The actual debate on Canon XXI was just as intense as the first go-round in 2016. Toronto members voted both for and against the amendment as their judgment directed. In the event, while overall 72% of GS voted to amend, the motion failed by two votes in the Order of Bishops. The hurt was immediate, and in some cases devastating. This debate and vote were undoubtedly the most draining part of Synod. All of us, whichever way we voted, gathered in a circle of prayer and support immediately after the vote.





You saw the headlines - “Anglicans reject same-sex marriage” - and there has been widespread damage to our evangelism. Members were getting emails and texts the next day, “that’s it, I’m done with the church.” However, we are a resurrection people; new life will come, maybe not in the way we expect.

The House of Bishops spent ten hours together in the days after the vote and came up with a message, delivered to GS with most of the bishops standing. They acknowledged tears and hurt and apologized for that. They spoke of some dioceses, in different contexts, pursuing a local option on equal marriage.

Toronto was one of the first four dioceses to move to local option after GS2016. Bishop Andrew has indicated that this will continue in Toronto. And not here only: before GS prorogued, several other dioceses moved to local option, and as of today, 18 of 31 dioceses have equal marriage.

Governance

The marriage canon vote at General Synod led to a resolution to mandate a thorough review of how General Synod is constituted and conducts its business. The Council of General Synod will report back to the next General Synod with recommendations.

As Anglicans, we are “episcopally led and synodically governed.” There is a strong feeling amongst many that the balance between these two aspects of our polity has become askew. The order of bishops was able to defeat the revision to the marriage canon,



despite strong majorities among the orders of clergy and laity. On the last day of General Synod, Bishop Jane Alexander of Edmonton told synod that she believes bishops should not be able to block the will of the Church.

Whereas representation among the clergy and laity at General Synod is roughly based on diocesan size, representation among the bishops is haphazard. For example, our diocese has twice the number of clergy and lay representatives when compared to our neighbouring Diocese of Niagara, but five times the number of bishops. The Diocese of the Arctic has four bishops. Some members expect that proposals will be considered which will limit





representation in the order of bishops to only diocesan bishops, or perhaps to weight the vote of bishops according to diocesan size.

Another issue that emerged at General Synod was the inability of clergy and laity to speak with a common voice. The Constitution currently allows the bishops to do so, and they took that opportunity in offering their apology for their actions. But clergy and laity who wished to make their own statement were blocked by the officers of General Synod. The upcoming review may look to strengthen synodical governance in our Church in order to allow robust and fair discernment for the future.

The Primacy

While many of our General Synod moments were stressful and business-driven, delegates were blessed to have time to elect a new primate and say thank you to our outgoing one. On the Saturday of our meeting, we met as a synod at Christ Church Cathedral for eucharist and the election of a new primate. The slate was made up of five individuals whose names were put forward by the National House of Bishops and then voted on.

The Primate is elected by the laypeople and clergy. The bishops are sequestered after the eucharist and did not vote. On the fourth ballot, we elected Linda Nicholls. With the election of Archbishop Linda, we said thank you and happy retirement to Archbishop Fred.

A thank-you dinner for the Primate was held, where he and Archbishop Linda wished each other well. General Synod ended with the installation of our new primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls.



Parish Visits

There is a lot of important work done during the sessions of Synod, and the agenda is full. However, it is the moments before,

between, and after sessions of Synod that are the most rewarding. In these times, delegates network, have discussions, and get to know and build meaningful relationships with fellow Anglicans from across the country.

Many of these opportunities for relationship building are unscheduled. However, this year the Synod delegates had the opportunity to visit local parishes for worship and fellowship on a Sunday morning. One was St. Anselm's, a small but vibrant parish located near the University of British Columbia. A group with Toronto's delegate Ryan Ramsden, Archbishop Anne Germond, metropolitan of the ecclesiastical province of Ontario, Benjamin Goetze, a youth member from Alberta, and Bill Mous, Secretary of Synod and Director of Administration in the Diocese of





Niagara, attended. It was a great way to get to know other delegates and meet some of our hosts.

The four were picked up by a churchwarden and his wife, who drove to the parish while taking a scenic tour along the way. There was a lovely worship service and homily from the Rev. Alex Wilson. He preached on John 20:1-18, the story of the empty tomb, Mary weeping, and the Easter resurrection - and he paralleled that to what was experienced at General Synod with the vote to amend the marriage canon two days prior. Ryan listened to his words, tears streamed down his face and he was smiling - something that hadn't happened much since the vote.

St. Anselm's worship space was special. Their off-centred cross hung above the altar. When asked about it, it was said that the architect hung it off-centre on purpose, as a reminder that we, and our lived faith in Christ, are not perfect.

After worship, the group was treated to warm hospitality, a delicious barbecue lunch, and a time of fellowship in the churchyard overlooking their beautiful community garden. It was a wonderful time, and delegates were happy the parish visits were made possible.

Collect & Recognition of Full Communion

How many of you know that there is a collect in our Book of Common Prayer p.41 "for the conversion of the Jews"? ... The Prayer Book Society, in consultation with the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus, reframed the prayer to "For Reconciliation with the Jews." This is to further strengthen our relationship with the Jewish people. General Synod approved it and Primate Fred Hiltz presented Rabbi Adam Stein with a gift and signed copy of Resolution A051-R2, "Prayer for Reconciliation with the Jewish People."

"O GOD, who didst choose Israel to be thine inheritance: Have mercy upon us and forgive us for violence and wickedness against our brother Jacob; the arrogance of our hearts and minds hath deceived us, and shame hath covered our face. Take away all pride and prejudice in us, and grant that we, together with the people whom thou didst first make thine own, may attain to the fulness of redemption which thou hast promised; to the honour and glory of thy most holy Name."

The evening of July 15, we had a fun moment to: "Recognize full communion among The Anglican Church of Canada, The Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America." Our primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, National Bishop Susan Johnson of the ELCIC, Presiding Bishop of the ELCA Elizabeth Eaton and Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church Michael Curry were dancing together to celebrate our willingness to be in full communion. Presiding Bishop Curry said, "God's love does not know borders."





Members of General Synod:

Bishops

The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil
The Rt. Rev. Peter Fenty
The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw
The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson
The Rt. Rev. Jenny Andison

Youth Member

Lyds Keesmaat-Walsh

Clerical Members

The Rev. Julia Burn
The Rev. Canon Philip Der
The Rev. Dr. Alison Falby
The Rev. Molly Finlay
The Rev. Canon David Harrison
The Rev. Canon Janet Read-Hockin
The Rev. Mark Regis
The Rev. Canon Nicola Skinner

Lay Members

Chris Ambidge, ODT
Joyce Badley, ODT
Leslie Hajdu, ODT
Ryan Ramsden
Marion Thompson
Mary Walsh, ODT
Laura Walton, ODT
Christian (Kit) Woods

I HAVE CALLED *You* BY NAME



GENERAL SYNOD OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, JULY 10 TO 16, 2019, VANCOUVER, B.C.

