

Diocesan Synod Report to St. George's Parish Council

The 148th Diocesan Synod took place May 23-25, 2019 at Dalhousie University Student Union Building (SUB). Sue Zinck, Jan Connors and Fr. Hatt attended on behalf of St. George's. Unfortunately, Fr. Hatt was called away for periods of time due to pastoral matters in the parish. We were at Table 9, with Fr. Colin Nicolle, from the parish of St. Mary's and St. John's in Summerside, PEI and two parishioners of that church, a husband and wife, as lay delegates,; and with Fr. John Wright of the Parish of Blue Rocks and a warden of 12 years as their lay delegate.

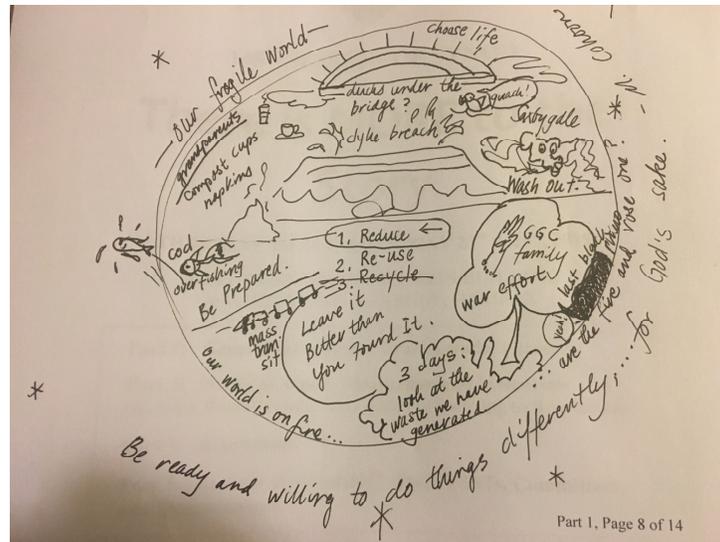
The Theme of Synod was, *There's More to the Story*, which carried the thread of MORE Mission Schools and the prior Synod themes of *It's About More*, and *It's About the World*. However, this Synod, unlike the past two, had a guest theme speaker. Jenny Salisbury, a lifelong Anglican is a Toronto-based theatre artist and educator and the Co-Artistic Director of Common Boots Theatre Company. Jenny holds an MA in Text and Performance from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and King's College, London, along with other credentials. Jenny teaches at both U of T as well as Huron University College where she has been the assistant director of "Ask & Imagine", a creative leadership program which Archbishop Ron noted has shaped a number of youth and youth leaders from our Diocese over the years.

Jenny spoke during a block of time each day of Synod about different aspect of 'story' in each of our lives and the importance of hearing one another's stories. There was a bit of time during each for table discussions. At one point, we were asked to share when we did not like the ending of a story we were hearing and how we tried to change it to a positive ending.

Two of the other speakers were from the National Church, one the Executive Director of the Primates World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF), and Melanie Delva, Reconciliation Animator for the Anglican Church of Canada. Melanie's role is "to be responsible for forming and equipping a national team to encourage and sustain engagement in the work of reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous persons and communities, both within the Anglican Church of Canada and in Canadian society". Her presentation was captivating, and from the perspective of a white Anglo-Saxon female who has developed a relationship with and has been adopted by several native families. Soon her entire presentation will be available in audio and video format through the Diocesan website. Her presentation was remarkable in how she witnessed to the power of forgiveness by telling of how she had begun her relationship with the community with mistakes-serious ones-that led her to repair and seek a deeper relationship. At our table, Jan spoke about how this made them feel more comfortable to reach out and led a discussion in which all agreed that her courage and vulnerability were remarkable. We learned again about the importance of 'making space' for another to tell their authentic story.

Worship throughout Synod exemplified the diversity of the Anglican Church. Opening worship included Scripture readings told as story, in dramatic fashion, as did the Commissioning Service at the conclusion of Synod on Saturday. Dean Paul Smith preached at the Synod Book of Alternative Services Eucharist at the Cathedral on Friday evening using props to open his sermon. The hymn selection was varied but included some traditional favorites; everyone sung lustily. These contrasted greatly to the Thursday evening worship where a pick-up choir called together by Fr. Hatt drawing from the King's College Chapel choir and folks from St. George's, all in black cassocks, led Compline sung in Plainsong Chant. I'm sure there were some delegates at Synod who had never heard music like this before.

Twenty resolutions were presented to Synod, most of which could be described as housekeeping items to bring Canons and the Constitution in line with one another or to reflect the reality of what is actually happening in the Diocese. The “audit checklist” which accompanies the annual Parochial Return was one such item, where the term is now replaced to reflect the ‘reviews’ that are actually being done; “audit” being a technical term describing a specific and expensive financial process. A resolution submitted by the Mothers’ Union and ACW to recognize and advocate against human trafficking passed unanimously. A resolution present to Synod after a Notice of Motion vote was passed, solidified Diocesan Synod’s acknowledgement of the Environmental crisis that exists, and measures to combat the issue. Sue drew a visual representation of the points to stay focused during the passionate discussion.



We also heard reports from ways that different parishes were living out the MORE Mission value. We heard about the ‘Jesus Rocks’ ministry of prayer rocks, and each table received rocks to take home that were painted by delegates visiting the booth during the Synod session.

The Resolutions that may have the most impact on each Parish of the Diocese in the long term involve changes from the currently allotment system. One most immediate is the phase in of a mission allotment to accomplish a couple of things: a) encourage parish to put more focus on the mission of the Church as opposed to an entirely building focus, and b) put the Diocese’s financial emphasis in line with the renewed focus on the mission of the Church; putting its money where its mouth is. However, Members were successful in ensuring the all of the Five Marks of Mission are included, and not just the first two as originally proposed. They are:



1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The second of these Resolutions was a call...loud and clear... from Member of Synod, for Financial Management and Development (FMD) VSST and Diocesan Council to research and report to the next Synod (2021) a much simpler allotment system. It is just too complicated.

How will all these affect St. George's? Jan's perspective as former parish treasurer is, that the allotment payable to the Diocese won't be affected much financially and it might make completing the Parochial Return a lot simpler. Exemptions might come on different line items, and the parish may want to ask the Friends of St. George's Society to extend its financial support differently. A portion of the clergy stipends would become a missional exemption. Sue interpreted one part of the debate which asked that a flat rate not be used as this may penalise less financially solvent parishes. The aim would be for a fairer system. It is possible we may pay a higher rate

In a year where we at St. George's are retelling our story twenty-five year after the fire, and where we are in light of the old Biblical and Gospel stories week by week, the importance of STORY, listening to the story of those whom we sit with on Sunday morning, the real stories of those who come to our door looking for help, of those who live in the neighbourhood, of those at the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, of those in the neighbourhood Churches, is really important for our Christian ministry and mission as we write our story going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Connors and Sue Zinck

