

Report to Immanuel members on the Highlights of the 84th Synod Diocese of Qu'Appelle Prepared by Joanne Shurvin-Martin: November 2022

The 84th Synod of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle was held at St. Paul's Cathedral, October 14 through 16. 23 of the 27 eligible clergy were present, and 41 of 48 lay delegates were also present, so quorum had been met.

Immanuel Parish was represented by: Rev. Diane Guilford, Deacon Susan Page, Rod Ashley, Pat Hall, Kurtis Krug, Diane Gingras, and Richard Simpson. Bryan Sigurdson was not a delegate, but made a presentation on the diocesan finances. Joanne Shurvin-Martin attended synod to cover the event for the *Saskatchewan Anglican*. Watch for the full report on synod in the December issue.

The Chancellor, Tom Irvine, carefully explained the need for several amendments to both the Special Act of Incorporation of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle, and the Diocesan Canons. After some questions and discussion, all the proposals were passed. None will affect the day-to-day operations of the Diocese.

In a video presentation, Kurtis Krug explained the diocesan involvement with Will Power, a national public education campaign designed to inspire Canadians to think differently about charitable giving, and empower them to create positive change through their wills. He referred to the website (www.willpower.ca), and to the diocesan website (quappelle.anglican.ca). Krug said, "Imagine what God could do with your gift!" He spoke in person after the video and mentioned another method to give to the church by changing the beneficiary on a life insurance policy.

Bryan Sigurdson, chair of the Finance Committee, presented the Financial Report. The 2021 audited statements show that as at December 31, 2021, the diocese reported \$9 million of total assets and unrestricted net assets (retained earnings) of \$500,000. Assets have grown substantially over the last four years as a result of property sales, bequests and refugee funds under administration.

On the revenue side, Fair Share expectations were reduced in 2021 due to COVID and have remained at that level for the 2023 budget. Although overall the parishes have done an outstanding job of meeting their Fair Share commitments, it is recognized that some parishes face significant financial challenges. No more income will be realized from Living the Mission beyond 2022, as that 5-year program has wound down. A deficit budget for the diocese has been approved for 2023.

To maintain a healthy financial position going forward, the diocese will focus on investment returns, legacy giving, stewardship education and resources, and new fundraising initiatives. A diocesan strategic plan is under development. That must come first. The financial plan will undergird the strategy for mission and growth.

The final slide that accompanied Sigurdson's presentation said: We need to pray and discern where God is leading us and how we can best do His work in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle.

Most of the discussions at the 84th Synod of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle aroused little controversy, but on October 15, the topic of same-sex marriage was raised. Delegates made arguments on both sides of the issue before voting on the resolution: *That the Synod seeks clarification from the Bishop of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle regarding 'Word to the Church' as a way forward, through a pastoral provision, for the local option for same sex marriage.*

The background to the resolution was the vote at General Synod in July 2019, where proposed changes to the Marriage Canon which would allow same-sex marriage, were defeated, by one vote in the House of Bishops, but passed by the clergy and lay houses. This meant that the resolution failed.

However, the document "A Word to the Church: Considering the Proposed Amendment of Marriage Canon XXI" was passed by the Council of General Synod on March 16, 2019. This recognizes the diversity in the Anglican church and that some diocesan bishops have authorised liturgies blessing same sex marriages. The document also states that bishops have jurisdiction and authority over services and liturgies in their dioceses.

"A Word to the Church" was unanimously accepted by the 2019 General Synod.

The resolution before the diocesan synod asked the bishop to explain how "A Word to the Church" affects the diocese. Following the debate, the vote passed with four votes against.

Bishop Helen Kennedy said she had done some homework in advance of synod, in preparation for possible questions on the subject of same-sex marriage. She said the Anglican Church of Canada acknowledges there are differing understanding of the Marriage Canon. The chancellor of the national church has said that the wording does not prohibit same-sex marriage, and what is not prohibited is permitted. Others, including some dioceses, do not agree, and say that marriage can only occur between a man and a woman.

Kennedy has previously said that she was at the 2019 General Synod (as a priest) and that she voted in favour of amending the Marriage Canon. She reminded the delegates that General Synod agreed to continue working and standing together, despite the different understanding of marriage.

The bishop said there will be a 'local option' for parishes in the diocese. She said she will instruct all parishes to continue to discuss this topic at their next Annual General Meetings. She will request each parish to vote whether or not to permit same-sex marriage or blessing in their parish. Each priest in the diocese will be asked to write to the bishop, confidentially, stating whether he or she is willing to conduct a same-sex marriage service.

The second resolution from the floor caused less controversy. Presented by Diane Gingras of Immanuel, Regina, and Rev. Nancy Yee, interim priest of St. Mary, Maple Creek and St. Stephen, Swift Current, it stated:

BE IT RESOLVED that the 84th Synod of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle calls upon the Anglican Church of Canada to continue to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery as basis for seizing native lands and the abuse of human rights of Indigenous peoples; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Diocese of Qu'Appelle support the Anglican Church of Canada to work towards eliminating the Doctrine of Discovery as a means to subjugate Indigenous people of property and land. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Diocese of Qu'Appelle continue to work with the Indigenous peoples and communities to advance the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In speaking to the motion, Rev. Alexander Campbell gave a brief history of the Doctrine of Discovery, proclaimed by the pope in 1452, which stated that indigenous peoples were not human. It stated that land which was not occupied by Christians was *terra nullius* (land belonging to nobody) and therefore could be claimed by European explorers.

In other comments, Rev. Diane Guilford, interim priest at Immanuel, Regina, encouraged everyone to read and study the Doctrine of Discovery. She suggested looking on YouTube where an Anglican Church of Canada video explains how the doctrine was used to claim North America. Bishop Kennedy said that the national church has repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery.

Nora Wasacase, lay delegate from Yorkton, encouraged people to participate in the Kairos Blanket Exercise. She said the Doctrine of Discovery no longer applies, adding, "We (First Nations peoples) are not savages!"

The vote on the Doctrine of Discovery passed with one vote opposed.