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65th Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton: September 29th-30th 1017. Report from St. Margaret's Delegates

A 'Diocesan Synod' is a gathering of delegates from every parish in a diocese. In the Diocese of Edmonton these synods tend to be held on average every 18-24 months.

A Synod might focus on one or all of four main areas:

1. Regular diocesan business (finance, electing committee members and delegates to Provincial and General Synod etc.).
2. Issues in the life of the Diocese (e.g. same-sex marriage, the REACH campaign).
3. The election of a new bishop (this is called an 'electoral synod' and obviously doesn't happen very often!).
4. Spiritual growth and uplift through guest speakers and workshops designed to encourage and inspire the delegates and thus influence the life of the parishes.

The recent 65th Synod of the Diocese of Edmonton focussed mainly on #4, with a small amount of #1.

Every parish sends its clergy and people's warden. Additional members are elected depending on the size of the parish, and the bishop also appoints additional delegates, including youth delegates. For this synod our delegates were the Rev. Tim Chesterton, Sarah Doyle, Sylvia Jayakaran (people's warden), and Brian Popp. The Bishop also appointed Ellis Jayakaran as a youth delegate.

Synods usually have a scriptural theme that guides and informs the discussion. The theme for the 65th Synod was 'Made New in Christ' based on 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

Brief Outline of the Proceedings (by Tim Chesterton)

The Synod began with an inspiring Eucharist at All Saints' Cathedral on Friday Sept. 29th at 7 p.m. Previously delegates had begun gathering in the late afternoon; there were displays put together by various groups and committees, and a light supper to fuel the proceedings!

The opening Eucharist was very uplifting, with excellent hymns and a fine sermon from Bishop Jane, probably one of the best I've heard from her. The takeaway line for me was her comment that an international Anglican committee on discipleship on which she serves had taken the title 'A Season of Intentional Discipleship' and replaced it with 'Living and Sharing the Jesus-Shaped Life'. I thought this was an excellent description of what Christian discipleship is about. Also at the service Father Michael Lapsley (our guest speaker from South Africa) was collated as an honorary canon of our diocese, and the Rev. Travis Enright was installed as Archdeacon for Indigenous Ministries.

After the service there was about an hour's worth of business, including formal opening of synod, receiving of reports, and election of members to various committees including the Diocesan Executive Council, Provincial Synod and General Synod. You will be pleased to know that our Brian Popp was elected to Diocesan Executive Council and the Diocesan Court.

Saturday was built mainly around two talks/interviews/sharing times with Father Michael Lapsley on the theme of healing and reconciliation. Brian has gone into a little more detail on this below; we were all certainly very inspired, and well able to make connections between Father Michael's experiences around apartheid and truth and reconciliation in South Africa and our own experience with First Nations peoples in Canada. We had opportunities to reflect in table groups on Father Michael's presentations.

Early on Saturday morning Archdeacon Richard King talked about 'I.D.' (Intentional Discipleship) based on Luke chapters 7-10.

Throughout the day we had short presentations from various diocesan groups and committees who had been invited to reflect on their work under the theme of Being Made New in Christ. I took part in one of those presentations on the new 'Lay Evangelist' program in the Diocese, doing a short interview with one of our Lay Evangelists in Training, Ali Hurlburt. Other short presentations focussed on the Prayer Book Society, Alpha, the Certificate of Theology in Anglican Studies, PWRDF, REACH campaign, Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, Social justice, and Interfaith Housing.

At the end of the Synod Bishop Jane gave a short talk on the subject 'Where Do We Go From Here?'; Sylvia has summarized it below.

Personally I always find that the best part of synods is not the speakers and workshops but just the friendships formed between people from different parishes and the informal networking that takes place. I was inspired to see all the lay delegates who had voluntarily given up a Friday evening and Saturday morning and afternoon to be part of this event. They did it because they love Christ and love the Church, and that love is very obvious and encouraging to me. That is my major takeaway from Synod.

Reflections from Sarah Doyle

This was my first time participating in Synod as a delegate of St. Margaret's. As such, I had no idea what to expect. I can summarize my experience in three words: uplifting, enlightening, and renewing.

Based on the theme of the 65th Synod, Bishop Jane invited us to reflect throughout the day and a half on how we have been made new in Christ. Or put another way, how we have been called to live in Christ Jesus?

With the help of Archdeacon Richard King, we explored this concept and the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 in more detail. For me, personally, this was the most spiritually enlightening

part of the Synod. Here are some of the highlights that really resonated with me as a Christian woman living in the twenty-first century:

- Traditional Christendom as we knew it is over. Where to from here? How can we be Christians and disciples in this new world?
- Being a disciple of Jesus doesn't actually require any special skills, knowledge or training. Think about the first disciples blindly following Jesus. What did they actually know before they went out and started spreading the gospel? They didn't even have the Bible yet!
- We all have gifts – some we may not even realize – that are uniquely ours. You've been equipped with a kind heart, a thoughtful mind, helping hands or perhaps a warm hug. These gifts alone are enough to fulfill Christ's mission for us.
- How have you been called to live in Christ Jesus? Or, said differently, what unique gifts have been given to you for the common good?
- Becoming new in Christ might be as simple as shedding one's old beliefs of Christendom (right way of thinking leads to right way of acting) and follow a simple formula neatly laid out for us in the Bible: engage (Luke 7), nurture (Luke 8), encounter (Luke 9), and grow (Luke 10).

Father Michael Lapsley echoed many of these sentiments when he stated, "The future of humanity is not a Christian world, it is an inter-faith world. We must get there quickly."

Reflections from Brian Popp

I had the honor of attending our recent Synod as an alternate delegate. I have attended a number of previous Synods in the Diocese of Athabasca, Calgary and Edmonton. I can honestly say this was one of the best I have attended! I found the worship uplifting, the music celebratory, the speakers informative and the presentations educational. I felt truly "Made New in Christ".

Bishop Jane's Report for the 65th Synod was organized around the 5 Marks of Mission. These five marks can be summarized as: tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure! These five actions signify that Jesus' love is making its mark on us!

Archdeacon Richard King spoke about I.D. – a framework to help us live our Intentional Discipleship, as Jesus' ambassadors, made new in Christ. This is a framework being "prototyped" for potential roll out across the Diocese. It is worth learning more about this!

Father Michael Lapsley from Cape Town, South Africa shared his story about reconciliation and leading a reconciled life following loss of both his arms, hearing in one ear and sight in one eye when he opened a letter bomb. The dialogue that followed enabled all participants at Synod to contemplate what their meaning of a "reconciled life" might look like!

A variety of speakers presented some of the current programs available within the Diocese to help us all to be "Made New in Christ". More details are available in the Convening Circular which can be shared with everyone.

The Bishop's closing comments included suggestions on "being open to the newness of Christ", "earth has to look more like heaven" and "we are all in the middle of the heart of God". I

personally came home with a renewed energy on how we might make St Margaret's a better community for Christ and for our parishioners!

Thank you to everyone for allowing me the opportunity to serve God and serve all of you!

Reflections from Sylvia Jayakaran

These notes focus particularly on the bishop's closing remarks from Day 2 (AKA "Call to action") that resonates with the Synod theme "Made New in Christ"

- Be open to the newness of God
- Check the attributes of healthy and vibrant churches. Compare them with the context of your church and examine areas that you can explore
- Plan to change the world with a clear mission and purpose.
- Actively seek reconciliation when needed
- Expect God to bless your church. Set a tone of welcome and feeling of inclusivity - this should apply to kids and adults alike
- Be churches that allow for the releasing of God's gifts within the parish
- Reflect the will of God to the church - that will put the five marks of the mission into practice
- Be a witness to Christian walk in daily life
- Be a better world that transcends boundaries of nationality, ethnicity, tribe, language, color and class

She ended with a doxology based on Ephesians 3:20

Overall the synod this time had a friendly and community vibe to it, with great praise and worship coupled with fine guest speakers.

Reflections from Ellis Jayakaran

As the first Synod that I have attended in my Christian journey, I could not have been happier with what I experienced and learned through the two-day event. Throughout the plethora of organizations and various delegates that had been chosen by the Bishop to speak at the event, I could not help but feel a deeper understanding of their roles in the Diocese, along with a feeling of great appreciation to be part of such a well-rounded and truly forward-thinking group of people.

During Synod, I had the pleasure of sitting down with Youth delegates from various parishes and discussed issues that could be dampening the overall potential and growth of the Anglican Church in the Edmonton region. After much deliberation we concluded that it is up to every one of us not just as various parishes, but as individuals to try and foster the growth of the Church; whether this is through inviting new families to our services, continuing our longstanding tradition of teaching young children at St. Margaret's about the power of God, or even creating new and unique church services and events to bolster the growth of a large Youth group at St. Margaret's for those who have graduated their time at Sunday School.

Regardless of the way we accomplish this, I earnestly hold the belief that with the power of the Holy Spirit and our trust in God, we will be able to be made new in Christ and further the overall goals of the Diocese of Edmonton.