

## SYNOD CHARGE – APRIL 20, 2015

**Archbishop John E. Privett**

**Though we are many, we all belong to each other.**

I speak with you this evening in the Name of God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Welcome to the 63rd gathering of the Synod of the Diocese of Kootenay. Welcome to each of you who are here as delegates; welcome to our special guests tonight and to the Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle who will be addressing our synod over the next two days; a very special welcome to Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada who was our preacher this evening and will be with us throughout the Synod; welcome to friends, family and visitors. As we begin tonight I want to thank our Synod Planning Committee for the careful and thoughtful work begun months ago as we prepared for this day. Nissa Basbaum, Anne McMichael, Richard Simpson, Austin Spry, Pam Wilson, Trevor Freeman and Kathryn Lockhart – thank you for your ministry to all of us.

*Though we are many we all belong to each other.* Take just a moment to look around at who is here tonight – we are many, representing many different places, many different congregations, many different gifts and dreams. Here we are gathered together in faith, hope and love – as the Synod of the Diocese of Kootenay – called into community and stronger together.

I am very aware, as you are, that this is my last Synod as Archbishop of Kootenay. When someone asked me how my days were – I said “my days are numbered!” I was very blessed to be able to take a 6 day silent retreat in Wales last summer. I went into the retreat with the intention of taking time to consider the life of the diocese, my own ministry as bishop and archbishop and to listen carefully to the leading of the Spirit. There were times for worship, for meeting with a spiritual director, for walking the beautiful Welsh hills, and for long periods for prayer and reflection. During the course of the retreat it became clear to me that the time had come for me to retire from this ministry. It was not an easy decision – I wrestled with it a great deal, but when the awareness finally came, it was very clear. So the next question was “When?” The date of this synod was an important marker as was the date of General Synod in 2019. With this Synod, the work of the Together in Mission campaign is continuing smoothly and we are seeing the fruits of that endeavour. The work of the Congregational Futures Committee and their proposals for nurturing faithful communities is a new focus which will likely engage us for

several years to come. I believe that that is best left to new leadership and it is important that my retirement date give you a chance to elect a bishop in time for General Synod next year.

It is tempting to turn this Synod Charge into something of a reminiscence and a retrospective of the last decade. But we are gathering here in Synod with important matters before us. Next month will be 13 years since you elected me to be your bishop on May 28, 2005. Suffice it to say that I am deeply grateful for the trust you placed in me and for the many ways that we have worked together in the diocese. It has been one of the great privileges of my life. Though we are many, I give thanks to God for our life together in the gospel.

It is said that our Anglican Church is episcopally led and synodically governed. We gather at this time as a Synod to pray together and deliberate together and to respond to the call of God's mission at this time. I offer leadership as a bishop in my role of episcopus – that is a Greek word which literally means to see over, or to see around. In my privileged position, I bring perspectives from across the diocese, across the Province and across the communion. As a Synod this is the governing body that will enact important resolutions and decisions for the good of the whole church. That all sounds a bit technical, so I like to describe our church as “A Bishop in Community”. Each diocese is a reflection of the Church in other parts of the world, with a Bishop in the midst of a community of faithful people. Each congregation with its priest and people is meant to mirror that reality. As a diocese we are a community of individuals, a community of worshipping people, a community of congregations. Though we are many, we are brought together – to respond to God's call to us at this time in our life as a Church.

As we gather over the next couple of days, we have four important pieces of work to do:

We will take seriously the responsibility of electing new members to our Diocesan Council, to Provincial Synod and to the General Synod. These are necessary and critically important roles and I hope that each delegate here has given serious thought to how you might offer your gifts to the service of Christ through the Councils of the Church. Please take the time to review the nominations, and to vote for those you wish to bring leadership in the coming years. As we complete the three year term since our last Synod, I want to express our thanks on behalf of the whole diocese, to those who have faithfully served as members of committees, and officers of Synod. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

Secondly, we will hear a report from our Canons revision committee on the process of electing a new bishop. Our electoral canon has been revised to clarify the process of seeking a

new bishop and to reflect the changes in technology which will affect how we gather information from candidates and determine the best ways to convey that to members of the electoral synod. We have been blessed with hardworking, intelligent, and experienced Canons Revision Committee members who have carefully consulted within the diocese and with other dioceses. They have worked to bring consistency between the proposal and other parts of the Canons and they will present a canon that will help the diocese to move toward an episcopal election with clarity and efficiency. The resolution on the electoral canon will come before you as an omnibus motion. Unlike government omnibus motions, there is no hidden agenda, or buried changes designed to pass unnoticed. It is presented as a single motion, because it is almost impossible to make amendments to a canon without the amendment affecting other sections of the canons which will then need to be amended. The intent is to have before you a resolution which will bring an updated, transparent process for the election. If you do not like the proposed process, then the resolution should be defeated. If you like the proposed changes but think there can be further improvements, then I would suggest that the way forward will be to vote in favour of the resolution while recording the suggestions for further work by the Canons committee in future revisions. Our Canons committee has been capably chaired by Mr. Peter Stafford from St. Christopher's, Osoyoos. Unfortunately, Peter is unable to be with us due to health concerns and so I am grateful that Canon Chris Harwood-Jones will present the committee report tomorrow.

Several people have asked what to expect in the coming months. I will retire as of May 31. The new Diocesan Council will meet early in June and one of the first orders of business will be to appoint an Episcopal Election Committee who will guide the preparations for an electoral Synod. After consideration of the work to be done, a date will be set and an electoral synod will be called. There will be an opportunity for congregations to consider what skills and characteristics you desire in a bishop and that information will form part of a diocesan profile. During the interim, the Canons make provision for an Administrator and I have asked our Dean, Nissa Basbaum, to take on that role. She will be assisted by Bishop James Cowan who will be available for episcopal services as needed, and by Archdeacon Trevor Freeman who will see that the Diocesan Centre continues to run smoothly. As always our Chancellor, Geord Holland, will be available to provide wise and diligent counsel as will our treasurer, Gerald Fitzgerald. We are blessed and extremely well served by our Synod staff – Bonnie Bailey and Kathryn Lockhart.

They know the life of the diocese intimately and will continue to support diocesan life as they have in the past.

Thirdly, we will hear presentations from the Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle, the Congregational Development Officer of the Diocese of Algoma and receive a major report from our Congregational Futures Committee. Jay has been involved in a consulting role with our team and he has brought a wealth of experience to our conversations. Jay, I am delighted that you can share some of your insights with the whole Synod this weekend. As you will hear tomorrow, the Congregational Futures Committee was established by our Diocesan Council after reviewing some of the statistics from our parishes and the sharing of some personal insights into the well-being of our parishes. Our team of Cindy Corrigan, Trevor Freeman, Colin Heggie, Katherine Hough, and Rick Schulz have done great work on our behalf. We are aware that the context for our mission has changed significantly over the last generation, and the challenges of 25 years ago are not the challenges of today. We have some very strong congregations in the diocese and we have a few that are holding their own quite well. We can also identify parishes which have been in decline, and we have been saddened to see the closure of three congregations since our last Synod. We give thanks for the years of worship, and witness in All Saints', Chase, St. Aidan's, Rutland and St. Peter's, Revelstoke. The context of our life has changed, but the mission of God continues in and through the church. Christ has Risen and God continues pour out the Holy Spirit which is always renewing our life together. You will be asked to consider a resolution which will begin the work of nurturing faithful communities in our Diocese in an intentional way.

Tomorrow night there will be an opportunity to gather in table groups to discuss the proposed changes to the marriage canon of General Synod to make provision for the marriage of same sex couples. This has been a conversation in the Church national and in Kootenay for some time and I am grateful for those congregations and regions who have taken seriously my request to study the report of the Marriage Commission entitled "This Holy Estate". We have debated this matter in the past and so rather than revisit the debate, our Synod planning committee have planned a conversation which will help guide the next bishop and Diocesan Council through 2019 and beyond. The focus of our conversation will be: How should we respond as a diocese if the marriage canon is passed? And how should we respond if the canon is defeated? We will gather the response of members of this synod as a resource for the future.

In addition to our major items of business there will be reports on our work as a Diocese. They represent an enormous amount of dedication from many people and summarize many wonderful ministries that our diocese has undertaken. I thank each and everyone involved in these varied ministries. In a time when the debate over fossil fuels is in the daily news, and the wars in the world continue to create the greatest refugee crisis since the second world war, I want to draw your attention to two of the reports in particular. These are directly related to two of our baptismal promises: Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and respect, sustain and renew the life of the earth? And, will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being? Julia Roberts' report on the Green Buildings Pilot Project and the Climate actions on pages 40-44 are a very practical guide on how individuals, congregations and the Diocese can take practical steps in caring for the environment. The Rev. Elizabeth Huether has an outstanding ministry as the diocesan Refugee Co-ordinator. As you will see in her report on page 29, 10 constituent groups have welcomed 60 newcomers to BC. Thank you Elizabeth and thank you to all who have participated in this important work of mercy.

Finally, I want to say how grateful we are that our beloved Primate, Fred Hiltz is able to be with us for this Synod. Archbishop Fred has given outstanding leadership in our Church and in the Communion and he has also carried the burdens that come in times of change and controversy. He has done so with grace and compassion. You will know that Fred will retire from the office of Primate at the end of the General Synod in July 2019. Fred, it has been a great privilege for me to serve with you during your ministry as Primate and I have personally known and appreciated your care and support for me and for the whole church. As you prepare for the changes ahead, I want to say on behalf of the whole Diocese of Kootenay, thank you for your wise and pastoral leadership. When you lay down the burden of office, I hope you might plan to bring Lynne back to this part of the world for a holiday among the mountains and vineyards of this corner of the country. You have many friends here!

And so here ends my charge. We have important work to do in the next 36 hours. Enjoy one another's company, be open to the leading of the Spirit and remember though we are many, we all belong to each other. The Lord is Risen, Alleluia!