



Bishop's Charge

To the

145th Session of Synod

When they had come together, the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord is this the time you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judaea and all Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1 (6-8)

I want to begin by saying what an incredible privilege it has been over these past twelve years to have chaired six regular sessions and one special session of synod in this diocese as your bishop. As I prepare to offer my sixth and final Charge to the 145th session of the Synod of the Diocese of Ontario, my heart is filled with gratitude for the many people among whom I have ministered and

worked as we have sought together to advance the Mission of Jesus in this beautiful corner of the world.

We gather on the cusp of the Great Feast of Pentecost, when the Church of Jesus Christ was birthed into existence, as the Power from on High descended upon the disciples of Jesus gathered together in Jerusalem. I have chosen this passage from Acts, chapter 1 as the theme scripture for my Charge. I chose it because it speaks to me about the “in between” time we often find ourselves in. The disciples were precisely in the middle of the “in between” time carrying them from the sadness of Good Friday through to the indescribable joy of the resurrection and finally to the days before the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

The “in between” time is marked by uncertainty and if you’re like me, there are dozens of questions that spring to mind, aimed at making certain the uncertain. The disciples are filled with just such questions. Here they are in the midst of a hostile world, that has rejected both the message they bear and the messenger who bore it. They have witnessed the incredible, the resurrection of Jesus, who has now called them to have peace in their hearts and joy in their souls as the promises of God are springing to fulfilment.

We all desire the sensation of solid ground under our feet as we navigate our way through life. The challenge of living within the “in between” time is that solid ground is often in short supply. The disciples tried to get back to solid ground by asking Jesus to make sense of the time in which they now found themselves. There must be a reason, there must be a purpose. It is the most natural human inclination to seek clear answers to the “why” questions that flood in when our world gets turned upside down. How often do we hear questions like “Why me?” or “Why is this happening?” when the ground suddenly falls out from beneath our feet.

The disciples believed that the answer to the question they put to Jesus will help them make sense of everything that has happened, leading to the imperilling of their own lives. Surely the Kingdom is to be imminently restored. Surely, the oppressors will be overthrown. Surely the resurrection of Jesus is the first step. Now God will act to fulfill the promises of the Covenant. They are, in essence, back in the Upper Room arguing over who is the greatest in the moments following Jesus' description of the bread and wine of the Last Supper being his offered body and shed blood. They are back on the road to Jerusalem asking for seats of power in the moments following Jesus' declaration of what will happen when they arrive in Jerusalem and he is handed over to the authorities.

Similar to those times and places where the disciples fail to understand the essence of the teachings of Jesus, about his mission in the world and the road upon which they travel together with him, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them about true leadership and the true essence of the Kingdom of God. He refuses to accept the context within which their questions are shaped and moves them toward an entirely new way of understanding Scripture and how the teachings of the Law and the Prophets speak into the days in which they live. Jesus says: “The rulers of the Gentiles Lord it over them and their Kings are tyrants over them.” He goes on: “It shall not be so with you. Whoever wants to be great must be a servant and the greatest of all shall be slave to all.” This is the context of the kingdom to which they belong and which Jesus came into the world to usher in.

The context of the Kingdom to which they belong is truly not of this world. When Pilate asked Jesus if he were a king, Jesus answered by stating that his kingdom was not of this world. There would be no armed insurrection here. No cause for condemnation in the view of Pilate whose kingdom was very much of this world. It was ultimately his fear of that kingdom and the consequences of not condemning a would be king, regardless of whether his kingdom was worldly or other worldly, that led him to ultimately hand Jesus over for crucifixion.

Jesus provides the disciples with an entirely new context for them to consider, painting a powerful new image of the situation in which they find themselves. They are to await a new gift from God. The creative power of the Spirit, the same who breathed over the chaos, bringing creation into existence, will now fall afresh on them to create a temple of Living Stones, the continuing manifestation of Jesus' body in the world. This Living Temple and the proclamation of the Good News of God will spread to the very ends of the Earth, and so they wait for a new gift and the beginning of a new mission. The Great Commandment upon which hangs all the law and the prophets and the Great Commission that calls them forward in the power of the Holy Spirit is the legacy Jesus hands to them as he ascends to sit at the right hand of God, his work on earth complete.

The theme of our Synod, "Forward! Together in the Spirit!" links us to that Great Commission, extending all the way back to that day when the disciples stood gazing into heaven and the angel of the Lord bade them travel back to Jerusalem to await the divine outpouring. The "in between" time now had clear purpose and the future lay before them. We who live in the great "in between" time of Jesus' ascension and return are always seeking to discern our mission and purpose for the times in which we are placed. The "why" questions of uncertainty

are replaced with the “how” questions that give shape to our mission. How are we called to serve? How do we order our common life to assist in fulfilling our mission? How can we best communicate the Good News of Jesus in word and action so that others may see the pearl of great price before them? How are we being called forward through the times in which we find ourselves? It is my fervent hope that as we gather together in synod, we will begin to give substance to some of those “how” questions, as you begin to chart the course for the years ahead.

When planning for this synod began over a year ago, there were three words that began to guide the planning process, those being situation, inspiration and celebration. When I first called together the Synod Planning team, it was my hope that this synod would be more focussed on program than business. Some of you who are old hands at synod might recall that when I delivered my first Charge to Synod in 2012, I outlined three imperatives that would guide our common life together as we gather in synod, those being the fiscal imperative, the governance imperative and the missional imperative. I noted that “these imperatives stand in a specific relationship to each other for the missional imperative must stand in overarching priority to the fiscal and governance imperatives. Put simply, the

question I would ask of decisions we make around fiscal and governance issues is:
How will these decisions enhance the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ?"

Since 2012 we have undertaken a number of initiatives and taken a variety of decisions, some more difficult than others, to enhance our ability to focus on the mission to which we are called as followers of Christ. Following Synod 2012, we established the Ministry Task Force who engaged in broad consultation around the diocese, compiling a robust and comprehensive report with recommendations for Synod 2014. Over 547 individual responses representing 17.5% of active parishioners were received by the Task Force. Its recommendations focussed on mission, through calls to engage more broadly with the wider community, consider new models of ministry, seek out new ways to make the Good News of Jesus more accessible and the list goes on.

The most enduring image from the efforts of the Ministry Task Force was the development of the parish covenants overseen by the Covenant Celebration Team. Over sixty covenants were received by the team and seed funding was made available for those covenants that had a financial component to get them going. My personal covenant in those years was to visit the parish councils of the diocese between 2014 and 2016 and I had the pleasure of attending 32 of those meetings to hear about the life of the parishes and the hopes and dreams

articulated around those tables. Some of the recommendations of the report did not enjoy such success, such as the hope to reinvigorate the Regional Assemblies or Great Chapters to bring regional parishes together to consider resource sharing and intergenerational ministry opportunities.

I believe that one focus of the Ministry Task Force, seeking opportunities for creative models of ministry and encouraging their development, has allowed us to look at regional ministry models as a dynamic way forward to bring congregations and parishes together in support of our common mission to the communities we serve. We have benefitted from the engagement of outside consultants, such as David Robinson, to assist us in moving these conversations along and developing proposals that have been implemented throughout various parts of the diocese.

The Ministry Task Force Report spoke of breaking down silos and pursuing opportunities for greater collaboration. Beyond seizing those opportunities among our parishes and congregations, this also raises the possibility of seeking greater ecumenical cooperation and the establishment of broad community partnerships. On the ecumenical front, our partnership with the Archdiocese of Kingston in refugee work continues under the leadership of DOORS and Refugee Coordinator, Mimi Merrill. This partnership, extending back to 2015, is the result of seizing opportunities to work together, in a spirit of cooperation, from the high ground of

our common call from Christ to go into all the world. We also share together in the Joint Commission on Justice and Peace which brings together those within our two Churches who have a passion for social justice and peace throughout the world. I know of a number of our parishes who work regularly with their ecumenical partners for the benefit of the communities they serve together. These ongoing efforts and future possibilities must remain a priority of our common witness in Christ.

The diocesan Vision and Strategy, “Living Boldly into the World” was adopted at Synod 2016 articulating three major actions to support the mission of the people of the Diocese of Ontario, those being “Mission Driven Stewardship”, “Investing in Ministry” and “Serving Communities”. The Vision and Strategy proposal called us to be rooted in the gospel of Christ, with parishes becoming more increasingly connected and engaged with one another and the communities that comprise their mission fields. Building on the work of the recommendations of the Ministry Task Force report and the Parish Covenant initiatives, this work sought to spur and encourage increased involvement of our parishes with one another and the wider community. I will be forever appreciative of the many ways in which parishes of the diocese have sought to reach out with these initiatives. There exist within our diocese, partnerships and ministries making a real

difference within the communities they serve, through meal programs, thrift shops, reading programs, housing support and the list goes on. Thank you to all who have heeded the call to move from “maintenance to mission” and have taken up the challenge.

One of my fervent hopes and prayers is that when something hoped, dreamed and planned for gets going, it will move from strength to strength. The truth is that some ideas will spark some lasting efforts, some will be cause for interesting discussion, some will generate ideas and there are those that simply never get off the ground. The good news through it all, is that the people of God are coming together to articulate vision and hope for the future. When that happens there is inevitably a “right now”, “not yet” or “never going to happen” result. We learn from them all and carry those lessons into the future. For the efforts that take off, the hope is that they grow from strength to strength.

One of the efforts that I rejoice in over the years of my time as your bishop is how the call to become connected and engaged within our parishes and communities has taken off. The covenant process with its granting component has brought us to the Reach and Stretch program, with increased opportunities and financial support available to encourage new ministry initiatives in the parishes. We have developed the position of Community Engagement Coordinator to assist

parishes in their continuing outreach. You may recall the work Taylor Lynch did during her time in that portfolio which focussed on developing partnerships for the 3 Adelaide Ministry Centre in Kingston, now home to the Peer to Peer Pilot Project in support of those who have recently come out of homelessness. This partnership, which includes Providence Care, Queens University and Western University, is under the direction of Dr. Carrie Ann Marshall. I am so pleased that Russ Grant of the Parish of North Hastings has taken on the role Of Community Engagement Coordinator and has quickly connected with the clergy, parishes and deaneries of our diocese to examine what is working and provide support and counsel for those who are looking to give birth to new ideas in mission.

I would be remiss if I did not convey to you, my profound thanks and appreciation for the ways in which the Ministry of Reconciliation has taken root in our diocese. From our commitment to renewed relationship with First Nations, through to the regular offering of the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation, this ministry has taken on a new and special significance within our common life. I fondly recall taking the Coventry Cross of Nails, as well as the salt and light candle throughout the diocese a few years ago during my parish visits. The powerful symbol of the Cross of Nails, presented to the cathedral in 2017 following their admission into the Community of the Cross of Nails in Coventry, coupled with the

salt and light candle given to each diocese of our Province by Archbishop Anne Germond to highlight her motto of our being salt and light for the world, continue to inspire me. They are both visual images of Good News, peace, justice, reconciliation and renewal within our world, whose rhetoric continues to sink to new depths of divisiveness, anger, suspicion and violence. I was heartened that in a recent consultation around financial direction within our diocese that reconciliation was, by far, the most prominent area proposed. It is no small thing that in 2021, our diocese committed to tithing 10% of all net future proceeds of property sales to reconciliation initiatives involving First Nations. I have extended an invitation on behalf of Synod Council to our new National Indigenous Archbishop, Chris Harper, who will be installed at Sacred Circle this Monday, to attend a meeting of Synod Council to discuss how best to direct and gift those funds.

Those three words, situation, inspiration and celebration have been a wonderful chart and compass for our time together in synod, beginning our time together by taking stock of where we find ourselves today within the diocese and then seeking the leading and motivating presence of the Spirit to point us on the way forward into the future. I believe there are some exciting times ahead for the Church as we chart the way forward. No doubt there will be challenges a plenty in

the days ahead and I often reflect upon the changed nature of the mission field into which we are called. Do you realize that we can no longer say that we are in the early years of the 21st century as we are almost a quarter of the way through it. The world has changed dramatically in the first quarter of the century, with technology completely overhauling most of human interaction. I was born and spent my early years in a small New Brunswick village where everyone knew one another and also what most of us were up to on any given day. The reality of the world in which we live today is that we live on a small planet, where we can know in an instant what folks are up to on the other side of the world. Decisions taken in the morning in one part of the world can have a dramatic effect by noon all around the globe.

The dramatic changes that are a part of the times in which we live are undoubtably affecting the life and mission of the church of Jesus Christ. There seems to be little room for mystery, for the faith that is the substance of things unseen and the essence of things hoped for. Faith is questioned under the same microscope that connects billions throughout the earth. Even the clear evidence of what can be seen and proven through scientific rigour cannot escape the critique of that lens, with suspicion being the starting point of investigation, instead of the curiosity that drives us on to discovery.

The next decade will undoubtedly present challenges that will call upon new models of leadership to address. My belief is that the Spirit is even now instilling in the hearts of those future leaders, the first intimations and inklings of a call to offer themselves in service to the Mission of Christ in the world. We need to be ready for them, working together in ways that build upon initiatives we are already undertaking, especially those that place the necessity of seeking wide partnerships within both Church and society at the very forefront. We need to take a wrecking ball to the silos that too often keep us separated from one another.

One of those exciting new initiatives was birthed into existence last summer as Bishops, formation folk and leaders of the seven dioceses of the province, together with the heads of the theological colleges, members of the Ontario Provincial Council on Theological Education and our full communion partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, gathered for a conference entitled “Pathways to Partnership: Calling and Forming Priests for Tomorrow’s Church”. In extending an invitation to potential attendees, Archbishop Anne Germond noted the following:

So much has changed in our church these last years. it is imperative that our province takes the time and expends the energy to do the work that will encourage and excite those whom God is calling to ordained ministry in these new times. It is

equally critical for us to ensure that all ordained leaders, called by the church, are prepared, supported, confident, and excited about the challenges that are before us as we embrace the mission of God in our respective dioceses and regions.

The potential for greater collaboration and cooperation is exciting and this work should be front and centre for our diocese and our partners across Ontario. We are always a people on a mission and from my perspective, rather than grieve the Church that was, we should see the fields as being “white to the harvest”, seizing the opportunities right in front of us. Let us “fling open the doors”, to quote the cathedral’s motto, and move out in the power of the Spirit toward a world as uncertain as the one the first disciples faced following Pentecost, but no less ripe with possibility.

I noted those three words, situation, inspiration and celebration, that became central to the planning for our synod. While considering our situation is important, I am excited that the focus of this synod will be centred more upon inspiration and celebration. I am pleased to welcome my good friend and colleague Bishop Susan Bell to our synod. Bishop Susan was co-chair of the Pathways to Partnership Conference along with Bishop John Chapman. Susan’s focus will be on helping us explore how to become a mission shaped diocese. Tomorrow will be given over to Susan’s leadership among us. She brings a wealth

of experience from her time as Canon Missioner in Toronto, to her emphasis on mission in the Diocese of Niagara where she serves and the establishment of the Niagara School for Ministry.

Not only do we need to focus on those who will be called to ordained ministry to serve tomorrow's church, we must also focus on the ministry of the baptized. Thus we will be giving consideration as to how the formation of Mission Action Plans within our parishes and the diocese will help us build upon the work already done and prepare us for the challenges lying ahead.

The COVID pandemic robbed us of many opportunities to gather, but it also provided us with even more opportunities to truly be the Church of Jesus Christ "IN" the world. It has been three years that we will never forget. Perhaps the only close comparison we can make is the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918, but the world was a far different place then.

One of the missed opportunities for us to gather and celebrate was on the occasion of our 160th anniversary as a diocese. I am thrilled that we will close our time together by gathering on Pentecost at the cathedral to give thanks for the legacy of faith handed on to us and celebrate the Spirit who is present with the Church in every generation. I am pleased to welcome our Archbishop, Anne Germond, to the Diocese. Archbishop Anne will be the preacher at our Pentecost

anniversary celebration, and I know from experience that joy and celebration are never far from Anne's heart.

It also gives me great pleasure to welcome our official synod observer, my good friend and colleague in full communion partnership, Bishop Michael Pryce of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Eastern Synod. Michael is no stranger to our diocese and we have benefitted from the cooperative spirit within the parishes where we both have a presence in ministry. Another welcome I would like to offer is to Sister Connie of the Sisters of St. John the Divine who will be our synod chaplain this year. Do take the opportunity to meet Sister Connie and also to ask about the exciting work at their location in North York with the planned renovations to the Guest House, which will provide a locale for retreats and conferences for all of our dioceses in the province.

Bishop George Bruce instituted the Diocesan Medal of Merit during his episcopacy. The medal is awarded to faithful lay Anglicans within our diocese whose contribution to the life of our church has been exemplary. It has been my joy to have awarded the medal on a number of occasions during my time in office. Today, I am pleased to announce the names of eight faithful people who have made significant contributions to our life together, as well as supporting the mission and ministry of Christ through the conscientious offering of their time and

skill. During the Celebration at the cathedral on Sunday, we will have the opportunity to celebrate, give thanks and honour these members of our diocese whose faith and outreach have been exemplary. In announcing these names today, I will provide a brief snippet of the work and ministries they have undertaken, but behind that brief description lies so much more they have accomplished to enhance our common life and witness.

Sylvia Dopking recently accepted my invitation to serve on the diocesan nominating committee. She accepted readily, saying that it was perhaps the only diocesan committee she had not served on. A member of St. Alban's Church in Odessa, Sylvia has indeed stepped up many times over the years. Recently, in the completion of a program at Thornloe University, she undertook a complete rewrite of the Training and Development Committee's handbook, which was such a tremendous gift to the ongoing work of the committee.

Doug Green, a member of the Parish of Tyendinaga, never hesitates to take on a task and tackles the work with joy and enthusiasm. That joy and enthusiasm was always evident in his work on the Covenant Celebration Team, as a member of Synod Council and in the many other ministries he has taken on. Doug has been a member of interview teams, always bringing a keen insight and sage counsel through those times. Doug is always present as crucifer when I offer Evensong at

His Majesty's Chapel Royal. He has been a tremendous support in planning this synod, arranging for the Mohawk Language workshop we will enjoy with Callie Hill of the TTO Language and Cultural Centre in Tyendinaga in addition to his work coordinating displays and booths at synod.

Michelle Hauser of the Parish of Saint Mary Magdalene in Napanee, is well known to many of you. She has worked in the diocese as the Stewardship Education Coordinator, Co-chaired Diocesan Synod and worked at the national level of our church. Currently, Michelle is a remarkable champion, through the Anglican Foundation of Canada, for the "Say Yes to Kids" campaign. The Harmony Lounge operating out of Saint Mary Magdalene's is but one of the many initiatives into which Michelle has poured her considerable talent and ability.

Aveleigh Kyle of St. George's Cathedral has served as Chair of "Lunch by George", Kingston's longest running meal support program, serving the most vulnerable within the city. The amazing group of people who support this initiative serve hundreds upon hundreds of meals every week. She serves on our synod council, has been a warden of St. Georges Cathedral and synod delegate. Like many of the clergy, Aveleigh has failed at retirement, but the people of Kingston and the area served by the Kingston General Hospital and her fellow staff members at KGH have been the beneficiaries. Aveleigh has stepped up time and time and time

again, especially during the pandemic to take shifts at KGH in the overwhelmed intensive care unit. She is one of those people who simply cannot walk by on the other side when people are in need.

Haroldine Neil-Burchert of Leeds Anglican Ministries has taken on ministry opportunities with a quiet efficiency that has served our Church at the Parish, Diocesan, Provincial and National levels. She has served as both a Provincial and General Synod delegate where she was elected in 2013 to serve on the Council of General Synod. She has been the Parish Secretary at St. Paul's in Kingston in addition to her ministry in LAM where she is, among other things, a Lay Reader.

Mary Raddon of St. Alban's Church in Odessa is the sort of team leader that is such a true gift. She is the ultimate team player, quick to deflect credit to the members of her team. Mary serves as the President of the Diocesan Lay Readers Association where, in addition to planning AGM's that both take care of business and provide nourishment for the soul, she takes the lead in planning the Summer Fruit for Souls Lay Leadership Conference, a week-long event that features speakers on a variety of topics of benefit to both lay readers and leaders within the diocese as well as being a time to renew friendships and make new ones. It is arguably the best Lay Leadership Conference in the country. One of the happy memories I will carry forward is Mary's annual call to start planning the

conference to take place two years down the road! In addition to her work in the Lay Readers Association, Mary along with her husband Don are active and committed members of the Diocesan Green Group.

Paula Walker of the Parish of St Philips in Milford is a long-standing member of the Diocesan Green Group, warden of her parish and Lay Reader within our diocese. Paula's commitment to the cause of environmental stewardship ensures that we consistently have the latest and best information at hand as we seek to put our responsibility to be faithful stewards of the creation into action through the decisions we take and the efforts we undertake at both the parish and diocesan levels.

Dr. Laurel Dempsey is a chorister and past warden at St. George's Cathedral, but for many years during my time in office, as well as that of Bishop George, she has served as diocesan physician, a role that many of you may not be aware of, but which is of invaluable support when needed by the bishop in support of sensitive and confidential medical situations arising from time to time. Laurel has always made time to support me in those circumstances and her advice and counsel has always been well received by all concerned.

As I said, I am only able to scratch the surface of the contributions these faithful Anglicans have made in supporting the mission and ministry of our Church as well as living out their baptismal promises. Thank you for all you do!

It is also my pleasure from time to time as bishop to appoint Canons to the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of St. George. During the pandemic time, I had announced the appointment of a number of Canons, but due to our inability to gather, their service of installation had been delayed. I am pleased that those installations are scheduled to take place at a service of Choral Evensong at the cathedral on June 7th. Today, it gives me great pleasure to announce, that in addition to those previous appointments, I have appointed **Deacon Fran Langlois** of St. Mary Magdalene's Parish in Picton to the Canonry of St. Phoebe. Canon Fran holds the bishop's licence to serve the ministry to seniors in Prince Edward County in the areas covered by the parishes of the County. She has diligently and faithfully carried forth that ministry over many years, in addition to her support of the ministry of St. Mary Magdalene's. Like her patron Phoebe, the first century deacon and fellow worker with St. Paul, Canon Fran has been noted by those among whom she has ministered to be an enthusiastic, joy filled and dedicated servant, as well as an invaluable team member among the clergy.

I would like to take a few moments to express my deep appreciation and thanks to the team at the Diocesan Centre who are tireless in their support of my vocation as bishop and in support of the parishes within our diocese. There is not enough time or adequate words that could ever express my appreciation for you all. Your dedication through every moment and every challenge is awe inspiring. My secretary and the Diocesan Registrar, Wendy Pierson comes to work every day with an attitude and spirit that is so incredibly positive regardless of whatever is about to hit the desk that day. Archdeacon Wayne Varley tackles every assignment I throw across his bow with a strength of purpose and a flexibility that inspires, having served as DEO, being seconded to a number of parishes needing strong interim ministry, tackling the new role of Archdeacon of Ministry and Program and all the many facets of that portfolio and being a trusted advisor, confidant and friend. Mark Hauser's communications work is the ultimate in professionalism and the absolute fun we have had over the years in preparing videos of all sorts and conditions and in all sorts and conditions of weather will always bring an easy smile to my face. Joyce Williams and Laura Conway are the dynamic duo in the Finance department taking on a whole new software program and serving the parishes of the diocese with grace and professionalism. They too, bring a positive attitude to the office each and every day. Archdeacon David Selzer has been a true

blessing from heaven, spending two years as Interim Dean of the Cathedral and then moving into the diocesan office as Diocesan Executive Officer pro tem as we moved into this “season of transition” in the life of our diocese. It is such a gift to have David’s experience to draw upon over this time. Finally, I want to express my deep appreciation to my friend and colleague in the office Alex Pierson. Who could have known that when we met for the first time as I started my Incumbency at Christ Church, Belleville in 2004 and he was the organist and choir director that this would commence a friendship and collaboration that would carry us into avenues we could not have imagined back then. Your unwavering support has been and is a true blessing to me.

If someone were to ask me what was the one thing that brought you the most joy in serving as Diocesan Bishop, there would be no hesitation on my part at all. It was the visits I made to the parishes and congregations of the diocese as they gathered for worship. The clergy and lay people of the parishes stand on the front line of the Churches’ presence in the world. My thanks to the clergy of our diocese who have given their lives over to call and mission of Jesus. I have stated that we are in challenging times and the way in which our clergy have risen up to meet the challenges of the days is a gift to me and the people we serve together. The lay people who contribute time, talent and treasure to maintaining the life of

our parishes create the fertile seedbed into which the Word of God is planted and grows to nurture and sustain our coming life. It is in those Sunday gatherings, each and every one of them over twelve years, where I always witnessed the joy and thanksgiving we have as the people of God ministering together in the vineyard given to our care. Thank you from a very grateful bishop.

Finally, I want to speak for a moment about the unique time in which we find ourselves following the election of Bishop William Cliff to serve as the thirteenth bishop of the Diocese of Ontario. We continue to hold everyone in prayer throughout the time needed to resolve this matter and trust that as the process continues, the Spirit will provide strength and clear vision. I have committed to remain in Office throughout this time and, as my letter of resignation stated, to remain in office until the installation of my successor. The mission and ministry of Jesus continues and I urge you as well as all involved in this matter to lean heavily into his enduring presence with us.

And so, I come to the conclusion of my final Charge to the Synod of the Diocese of Ontario. When I first became your bishop in 2011, I took as my motto a phrase from the American theologian Frederick Buechner. It seemed to me to be the best means of determining where we are called to be and the thankfulness in our hearts we should have at all times within the ministry to which we are called.

Buechner wrote that “Your vocation is found where your greatest joy meets the world’s greatest need.” May joy continually be at your side as you carry your vocation forward into the world where Christ beckons. The world is waiting.