

ARCHBISHOP'S CHARGE



“People of Promise: Our Story, Our Joy, Our Hope”

by
The Most Reverend Anne Germond
B.A. (Hons.), B.Th.

ARCHBISHOP OF ALGOMA
TO THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION
OF THE
SYNOD OF
THE DIOCESE OF ALGOMA
Anglican Church of Canada
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

May 11, 2023



Archbishop Anne Germond

Charge to the 51st Synod of the Diocese of Algoma

May 11th, 2023

Diocese of Algoma Motto:

“To share in the gathering work of Christ so that his newness of life overflows into our hearts, homes, churches and communities.”

Synod 2023 Theme:

People of Promise: Our Story, Our Joy, Our Hope

People of Promise, I welcome you as the 51st Synod of the Diocese of Algoma. We gather in the name of God who has, ‘given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ (1 Peter 1.3) Our story, our joy, and our hope are rooted in the story of Jesus, who we love and trust and believe, and in whose footsteps we are daily inspired to follow.

Over the next few days as we listen and speak with one another, we do so before God and with God. Through our time of prayer and worship we invite God into every conversation, every interaction we have, every moment we spend together.

This is our first in person gathering of Synod since the declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic in March of 2020. There was a time when I wondered whether we would ever again resume anything resembling normalcy, but the World Health Organization’s Coronavirus dashboard tells us that new Covid cases and deaths are finally waning. This is thanks in no small part to the miracles of modern science and medicine, and the care we have all taken in loving our neighbours through carefully following many protocols. Yet even as we emerge from this time, we do not do so unscathed. We must never forget the impact and cost of Covid-19 in our own lives and circles, and worldwide.

Let us never take for granted the ability to gather in the way we are doing this week at these tables for fellowship and conversation, and at the Lord’s Table to break bread and share the cup of wine. Online services of worship and the ability to meet on electronic platforms have made it possible to extend our reach far beyond the walls of our church buildings and the boundaries of our parishes. Still, I think you’d agree there is something pretty special about sitting around tables as we are doing now that enables us to experience the warmth and energy made possible when we are together.

Here and now, I invite you to take a moment to look around you and ‘see’ your fellow delegates. Acknowledge them. Give thanks for their presence.

You are representing fifty parishes from five distinct deaneries within this vast and beautiful Diocese of Algoma. Despite different contexts, different worries and joys, different challenges, hopes and dreams, we gather as Synod, a people filled with God’s promises, seeking God, praising God, empowered to take God’s story back into the hearts, homes, churches, and communities around Algoma when we leave here on Saturday.

We offer a special Algoma welcome to the delegates for whom this is their first Synod (please stand). We welcome our guest preacher from last evening, our dear friend Bishop Michael Oulton from the Diocese of Ontario (please stand), and his travelling companion and friend, Archbishop Francisco Da Silva from Brazil (please stand).

We offer warm and sincere congratulations to the newest deacons in Christ’s church: Jan Latham, Thomas Ferris, and Deb Everest (please stand), and our Honorary Canons, Garth O’Neill, Ken Lawson, and Jane Mesich (please stand).

And we offer our warmest good wishes to King Charles III and Queen Camilla as His Majesty begins his reign as our Sovereign. May our King serve in wisdom and equity, righteousness, and peace.

Our Keynote Speaker at Synod 2023 – 1 Peter and the Lambeth Conference

This Synod, I have invited the writer of the First Epistle of Peter to be our keynote speaker. 1 Peter was the text the Archbishop of Canterbury chose for the 2022 Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, in which I had the privilege of participating with bishops from around the Anglican Communion.

During the conference, we spent time listening to the Archbishop of Canterbury’s daily biblical exposition on 1 Peter. We then headed into small study groups where we listened and learned from one another, wrestling with the epistle’s themes of hope, holiness and joy, hospitality, risk, witness, resistance and resilience, seeking both meaning and newness of life in them.

These are words for us to live by in our fractured and divided world, words with which we will engage as we meet in Scripture Circles over the next two days. The first hearers of this epistle lived in a world of violence and conflict, a world of injustice and inequality. It was a world sometimes hostile, sometimes indifferent to people of faith. These believers often experienced alienation from the society around them because of their faith in Jesus. Sound familiar?

Peter's hearers, however, are named as 'chosen', 'destined', and 'sanctified' by Jesus Christ. God has chosen these exiles to be God's own. The Spirit of God has made them holy. What a source of encouragement and consolation for the recipients of this letter, and for us today as the church becomes increasingly marginalized in the world!

And what a world it is! From the invasion of Ukraine to ongoing Covid concerns; from inflation to climate change; from an increase in violence and conflict to the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor, especially such areas as homelessness and affordable housing, there is an upswing of anxiety, stress, and depression in people of all ages. This particular time in our lives generates hard questions for the church. It is often those enduring poverty, the outcast, women, those denied basic rights who suffer the most in this broken world of ours, a world in which there are no easy answers or quick fixes.

As the Church, our self understanding as God's chosen people - people of promise, made in God's own image and likeness - demands that we stand with the suffering people in God's world and hold one another accountable for its repair. There is a Hebrew expression for this - 'Tikkum Olan.' This is something we have participated in and borne witness to through acts of mercy, justice, and kindness.

In Algoma we share a common vision of God's mission for the world, entrusted with a Christian witness in word and deed. We, too, are chosen and destined, bearing the name of Christ, even if it leads to suffering. We are protected by the power of God. Peter's letter exhorts us to put our collective faith in God, to maintain hope in an environment of suspicion and hostility. We are given a pattern to guide us in the healing of this broken world.

At the Lambeth Conference, participants heard incredible stories of hope and healing in the midst of immense suffering. The Bishop of Korea spoke of the 270km pilgrimage over nine days he makes with troubled youth, walking alongside them, listening to their troubles, offering guidance and hope for a new future. One of the bishops from South Sudan has spent his entire episcopacy ministering in a refugee camp where, even in dire circumstances, young people come to know the Lord and are baptized. Another bishop showed a video of himself going through a community of grass huts following a devastating flood. Only the very tops of the huts are visible. I asked him how long it took for help to come. He replied, "Help never comes."

We heard of communities going to church in greater numbers the week after a suicide bomb attack killed 160 of them. We heard of bishops flying with an organization called Missionary Aviation Fellowship into a remote part of Papua New Guinea, working for a week in the mountains, presiding at Confirmations. We heard of those who protest against civil rights abuses, against shooting unarmed people of colour in a routine traffic stop. We heard of love. We heard of courage. We heard of faith overcoming fear.

In our small study groups, each of us coming from very different ministry contexts, translators helping us to cross language barriers, we discovered that transformation begins in truly hearing one another, in understanding the differences of our contexts, in building relationships, and in cultivating within ourselves the mind of Christ.

We left Lambeth without fixing the problems of the church or repairing the world, but we did begin the equally difficult work of healing broken relationships by being together, actively listening to one another, and committing to prayer for one another. As it is written in 1 Peter, *"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another and be compassionate and humble."* (1 Peter 3.8)

Humble. Compassionate. Loving. Sympathetic. Like-minded. Day after day, as we embodied these qualities, we experienced the Risen Christ in our midst - the One who did not wait for his disciples to go to Him, but who went and stood with them in their fear and then invited them not to remain there but to go out into the world, baptizing and making disciples of all nations, revealing the reign of God.

We committed to bringing the *Lambeth Calls* ([found here](#)) to our respective dioceses.

Surely one of the tasks of the Church, of us as people of promise, is to keep reminding others 'steadfastly of that horizon of hope'² in the Risen Christ. More than ever, we need to walk with one another to truly be **God's Church for God's World.**²⁻³

For Christians, there is always a sense that we are waiting for something not yet materialized. The kingdom of God is now, we say, but not yet. We have hope, and we try to hold onto this hope, but there are times it feels as if we are still living in that early dawn experience of the first disciples arriving at the empty tomb. They knew something was up, but they did not understand the extent of it all. In his closing sermon at the Lambeth Conference the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke these prophetic and hopeful words:

"God's promises will be fulfilled. He will draw abundance out of barrenness and riches out of our poverty. That is his promise to us. And that releases us to be radical, bold, courageous, revolutionary today.

*To have the courage to have faith in God. To be brave enough to defy the world, even to defy other Christians, by loving one another without ceasing."*⁴

People of Promise: The Church as a Sacrament in the World

Now, more than ever, the world is waiting expectantly for a church that looks like the faith it professes – a church that brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and sees the oppressed go free. The world needs a church that is a sacrament, that is, a people in whom God's gracious love is encountered in a visible and tangible way.

Sacraments don't make true, they make real. Pouring water over a baptismal candidate and marking them with the sign of the cross doesn't cause God to love them; God already loves them. We baptize to bring a people already loved into a community that makes God's love visible in its life. Bit by bit that kind of loving reshapes us and transforms us into the living limbs of the Body of Christ.

At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed his friends would be so nourished that they become bread for the world, for those who long to taste God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. This Jesus prayed the church would be one body, just as he and his Father are one.

Becoming such a body may be a long process that leaves us scarred as it did the One who is our head. But, to quote the Skin Horse in Marjorie Williams Book *The Velveteen Rabbit*.

"It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

— *Margery Williams Bianco, The Velveteen Rabbit*

How we are living into being a people of promise in Algoma is part of our story, our joy, and our hope. Since we last gathered for Synod in 2021, I have witnessed signs of God's people in Algoma being sacraments for the world and embodying the promises of God. In the midst of great fragility, there is much that has caused us to delight in wonderful and extraordinary ways around the Diocese.

Here are just a few of the ways it is evident that God is up to something in Algoma:

Thank you for your responses to the motion of Synod 2021 by bringing cards with innovative ideas of things that have worked in your context, and yes, even the things that didn't work. There's no failure in learning and growing from our mistakes.

A new kind of flourishing is evident within our churches as new families and seekers arrive for Sunday worship. Our congregations are becoming visibly diverse as we welcome individuals from around the Anglican Communion. Some have come to Canada to begin studies in one of our universities or community colleges, bringing with them their own traditions, which add richness to our own. In addition, we are entering into new shared ministry agreements with congregations in the United Church of Canada and the ELCIC (Lutheran Church).

We are seeing the re-emergence of child and youth ministry following their absence during the pandemic, with fresh expressions of intergenerational ministries like *Messy Church* and "family church" sprouting up all over the place. In some instances, the parish

has become an extended family for young people who don't have the kind of nurturing and support that others do at home.

There are a number of congregations within Algoma undertaking 'Courageous Conversations' to determine the shape of future ministry in their area. More and more regional ministries are being birthed, as full-time and one-point incumbencies are becoming more and more difficult to resource.

The work of reconciliation, central to the mission of the church, continues as we address the history of colonization in Canada and the Church's own role in the residential school system. In Sault Ste. Marie, we were thrilled to be invited to the opening of the new Métis Community Centre at the site of the former St. John's Anglican Church. At Christmas time, Elder Willard Pine arranged for wood bundles to be distributed throughout Garden River for Sacred Fires. We gave \$78,000.00 to the Shingwauk Residential School Centre here in Sault Ste. Marie, and we still have funds set aside for an Indigenous Ministry Worker position located in the Thunder Bay area.

In September 2022, we were delighted to welcome to our Diocese Father Michael Lapsley, a former South African anti-apartheid activist. Now a reconciliation facilitator, Fr. Michael spoke to churches and community groups on forgiveness and the healing of memories.

Last spring and summer, it was exciting to see Algomites taking up the call to plant trees as a symbol of hope for the future, of our shared commitment to God's creation, and the baptismal promise to sustain and renew the life of the earth. These trees are beginning to bud and bloom. In 2022, five saplings were planted in the garden at Bishophurst (do check them out at the reception on Friday evening) and another five will be planted this year.

One initiative of Lambeth was the beginning of the Communion Forest,⁵ asking every province in the Communion to carry this endeavour into their context, planting trees to mirror God's love for creation, and a recognition that the environmental emergency we are witnessing is not just a physical crisis but a spiritual one. During our visit to Lambeth Palace, we witnessed the symbolic planting of one tree and committed to doing what we could in our own provinces and dioceses as a practical, spiritual response, and an act of Christian Hope. I ask Synod to call upon the Diocese to continue growing the Green Canopy by participating in the Communion Forest in Algoma and by advocating against deforestation. Every time we protect and care for God's creation, we have a positive impact on our global neighbours, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

Other signs of God's kingdom in Algoma were the many Confirmations that have taken place in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, North Bay, Coniston, and Huntsville. To witness young people and adults reaffirming their faith and commitment to Jesus, and to hear

them sharing their new-found faith was a blessing to me. Just recently, we celebrated Confirmation at the F.J. Davey Home, a long-term care facility here in Sault Ste. Marie.

And what about the new ordinands who bring so much to our Diocese in their new ministries – Katherine Walker whose curacy at St. Luke’s enabled her to become a full time Chaplain in the military; Ann Camber, now incumbent at Gathering Table; Beverly Van der Jagt, newly ordained as a priest and the incumbent of a shared ministry in Espanola between the Anglican Church and the United Church; three new vocational deacons: Elizabeth Kingston from Llewellyn Beach on St. Joseph Island, Joyce Foster from the parishes of Manitoulin, and Norm Blanchard, whose primary vocation is the spiritual care lead at the hospice in Sudbury. I will say more shortly about discerning and supporting vocations to ordained ministry in Algoma.

Another Kingdom sign is the sterling job the members of our Social Justice Committee are doing in raising our awareness of a number of issues. Created in 2021, there is a representative from every deanery on this committee. During one of the break-out sessions we will be hearing more about the very timely issue of homelessness and its societal impact.

Homelessness is an overwhelming issue complicated by many other injustices. It causes several thousand early and preventable deaths each year. People experiencing homelessness are often stigmatized and experience discrimination.

Likewise, lack of affordable housing affects many people, especially young people starting out in life, those on minimum wage, and seniors. In some cities and towns within Algoma, it is becoming impossible for the average family to buy or even rent a home. In an Ipsos poll taken in April 2022, 63% of non-homeowners in Ontario have given up hope of ever being able to own their own home.⁶

According to the United Nations, affordable housing IS a human right, which makes homelessness a violation of human rights. As church, what is our role in all of this, and where do we go from here?

The Social Justice Committee hopes that, listening and discussing this question at this Synod and in the months ahead, we will be led to also ACT.

Yet another sign of the Kingdom in our midst: Since early last year, when Ukraine was invaded by Russia, we have joined in prayer for its people, standing together with individuals from every creed and culture, wearing the colours of the Ukrainian flag – blue and yellow in specially made ribbons – praying that God would bring an end to this devastating war. We have prayed, too, for the many people of Russia caught in the middle. Communities went on peace walks and continue to financially support Ukrainians as they flee from their homeland to safety in countries that offer them sanctuary.

We echo the prayer offered by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York:

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

The People of Promise as a Holy Saturday Church

In her book, *Failure*⁷, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lenten 2023 book, Bishop Emma Ineson writes about the Church at this particular time being a Holy Saturday Church – a Church that is trying to make sense of times which don't make any apparent sense at all, even as we embody hope and walk intentionally towards the Easter dawn.

"Sometimes," she writes, as a Holy Saturday Church, "all we can do is kneel and wait, and not much else" because we can no longer rely on our own ingenuity, cleverness, or strength. Indeed, she wonders if we have any of these things anyway.

Perhaps the first important lesson in being a Holy Saturday Church is the recognition that self-sufficiency is just an illusion, and that we have to start believing more in God and less in ourselves.

The second, equally important lesson as a Holy Saturday Church is that we don't linger too long in Good Friday or hurry too quickly to Easter Sunday, but rather sit with the disciples as we try to make sense of what just happened through the Covid time that exacerbated the decline and fragility of our churches, while perhaps prompting a new flourishing in others.

As Holy Saturday people, we learn to trust in God's provision and promise to walk with us in our uncertainty and unknowing. Along the road to Emmaus, on the evening of that first Easter, it was only after the risen Jesus had left the bewildered disciples that their eyes were opened, and they realized their hearts had been burning within them all along. (Luke 24.32).

On Holy Saturday, we stand in the shadow of the cross, awaiting the full sunrise of Easter Sunday. Yet, Holy Saturday is not an empty day. It is also the day members of our Altar

Guilds return to their Good Friday tomb-like churches and begin the process of preparing for Easter Sunday. They put back the holy hardware that was removed in reverent and solemn silence on Maundy Thursday. Linens, freshly laundered, are lovingly placed on the altar. The brassware and silverware is polished with vigour and set in place. New wine is poured into cruets and set on the credence table. Spring flowers are arranged in vases on the reredos. Wooden pews that had lost their lustre are oiled, and floors are scrubbed clean. Everything is undertaken with care, trusting, and believing the joy of Easter morning will come.

Let's hold this image of being a Holy Saturday Church as we plan for the next two years in Algoma by taking and reworking, reshaping, restoring what we already have. In so doing, we may discover new pathways we hadn't explored before. There is much from which to draw deeply in this work – the seeds of discipleship, stewardship, reconciliation, and community building that we are already carrying, our sacred scriptures to guide us, our liturgical practices to re-form us more and more into the people of promise we already are, a sacrament in and for the world.

Many scholars have suggested that 1 Peter might well have drawn on a baptismal sermon about what it means to be the people of God. My prayer is that in the coming years we who are chosen, who are God's own people called out of darkness into God's marvellous light will more and more, "Like living stones let ourselves be built into a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2.5)

Shaping a People of Promise: A Renewed Emphasis on Formation

Inspired by the title of The Rev. Canon Dr. John Gibaut's (President, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Thorneloe University) plenary session at Synod, *'Loving God with our minds'*, I am proposing increased attention to formation in our life in Christ for all of the baptized in Algoma, loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

By 'all' of the baptized I mean children and youth, young adults, busy and growing families, single parents, mid career professionals, retirees, and seniors – all of whom through baptism have been joined to the Body of Christ – a Eucharistic people, in the world to share in Christ's continuing mission to the world.

In the baptismal liturgy, all Christians make or renew a covenant with God and with one another to deepen practices and habits that reflect our identity in Christ. During the presentation and examination of infant candidates for baptism, parents and sponsors are asked whether they will "by their prayers and witness" help the child they are presenting to "grow into the full stature of Christ." For all candidates, the gathered people pledge support. Baptism is the beginning of a life-long journey of formation, and every congregation has a vital role to play in nurturing faith in believers. Disciples don't just

appear, magically formed, it takes work, a lot of work by the whole church to grow disciples for Jesus. Placing priority on formation is vital, not just for our own sake, but also in order to share in the gathering work of Christ so His newness of life overflows into our hearts, homes, churches, and community.

Everyone has a role to play in the work of formation through our common prayer and worship, where we not only proclaim, but also embody a sense of God's reign in our Eucharistic celebrations and other liturgies.

Formation happens when we take hospitality seriously and are deliberate in our efforts to welcome, engage, and make space for the newcomer and stranger – not only on Sundays but whenever we encounter them. ⁸

Formation happens when we collaborate and cooperate in the local, diocesan, provincial, national, and global expressions of the church, seeing ourselves not as islands but as God's Church for God's World.

Formation happens when we participate in learning opportunities when they arise; when we immerse ourselves in the scriptures and take daily prayer seriously, and when we share our faith with others when we are given the opportunity. That's not easy for everyone to do, but it is crucial to new people coming to faith. I am delighted that this fall six incumbents will be attending the St. Clement's School of Preaching. Another cleric has been selected to participate in the Episcopal Preaching Foundation's 2023 Preaching Excellence Program for students and newly ordained in Richmond, Virginia.

Think for a moment about your own faith journey. Perhaps it is similar to mine. I came to know Christ and what it means to follow him and live in him, not through a single experience, but because someone took the time to walk alongside me and tell me about the difference Jesus makes in their life, about a prayer answered, and about how they are sharing in God's mission in the world. They passed on their faith to me...it's just the way it happens.

The truth is that we have a great story to make known about Christ's redeeming love and the kingdom of God that is alive and well and in our midst. We are called to grow in our faith, to be transformed in our lives, and through our words and actions to invite others to do the same. If we are to thrive as a people of promise, we must take discipleship seriously, and we cannot afford to limit Christian formation to something we do as a Lenten activity or an occasional special campaign.

We have learned that, in Algoma, 'one size doesn't fit all'. Likewise, our experience during the recent pandemic means the decline in resources upon which we depended in the past has accelerated. We need to wrestle with what will work in this context rather than simply opting out of doing things that might be hard or demanding.

Let me tell you about a new initiative coming soon to Algoma that gathers up all I just have been describing. Building on formation efforts to date and on the regular rhythms we take for granted in our common life, we recently applied for, and received, a grant from the Anglican Foundation of Canada for an innovative ministry initiative called, ***ReStorying the Church***.

This initiative, facilitated by the Diocesan Archdeacon, recognizes there are proven habits congregations can foster to nurture, grow, and share with others their faith, whether or not they are flush with resources. During one of the breakout groups this afternoon Archdeacon Jay will be offering a presentation on ***ReStorying the Church***.

It will initially bring together, for a weekend, participants who are willing to commit to a process of action/reflection, and to receive training to coach and model for others.

This is a long-term initiative which, over the coming years, will involve a wider circle of congregations and individuals. It will explore ways to relate patterns of ministry and mission (baptismal living, discipleship, service, outreach, community-building) and ritual practice (e.g. baptism and Eucharist, the divine office, proclamation and preaching, music, movement, the liturgical year).

Using activities and resources common to all congregations, faith communities will be better able to rediscover a rich treasure we have failed to draw upon and increasingly prioritize formation as a significant foundational dimension in our common life. I ask Synod to commend the ***ReStorying the Church*** process not simply as another project for the next year or two, but rather as a comprehensive pattern of formation to become habitual for years to come.

Equipping a People of Promise: Renewed Emphasis on Vocations to Holy Orders

Within the Anglican Church of Canada there is an increased emphasis on vocation and the formation of individuals for ordered ministry within the Church. At its fall 2022 meeting, Provincial Council (the group within the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario which meets between Provincial Synods) named “Theological Formation and Vocations” as its primary focus until the next Provincial Synod in the fall of 2024.

So much has changed in our Church these last years, which means it is imperative we take the time and do the work to encourage and excite those whom God is calling to ordained ministry in these new times.

We already know that in our context one particular kind of theological education does not work for everyone God calls into ordained ministry. Yet, we recognise that all called by the Church to ordination need to be well formed for their ministries through

theological education and the support of their dioceses in order to be confident and excited about the possibilities before them.

Traditionally, the path to ordained ministry in the Church has taken place in a seminary. The word ‘seminary’ has its origins in a seedbed or a new garden, with seminarians being carefully raised and prepared in an environment that is protected. But, nowadays, theological educators are suggesting the wilderness, where there is less protection and more unknown about the environment around them, is a better image for the necessary setting of ministerial formation.

Speaking of theological education, Archbishop Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, says, “*It’s not about a set of issues or problems; it’s about a landscape you move into—the new creation, if you like. You inhabit this new set of relationships, this new set of perspectives. You see differently; you sense differently; you relate differently.*”⁹ If we are talking about a new creation, then we need a map that will get us there.

These are important matters to think about and will take time to figure out. However, we know that being properly formed for ministry and being a learning church are vital for the future health of the people of promise. As Metropolitan for Ontario, I am delighted we are taking vocations and formation for priestly ministry seriously.

Last June, the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario hosted “Calling and Forming Priests for Tomorrow’s Church: Pathways to Partnership,” a conference held at Nottawasaga Inn. The conference planning was chaired by Bishop John Chapman and Bishop Susan Bell and facilitated by Susan Graham Walker and Archbishop Colin Johnson.

Lay and clergy representatives from the seven dioceses within Ontario and several theological colleges met for in depth discussions about discipleship and vocational discernment, intensive and extended formation and education programmes, on being life-long learners, the place of incubator parishes, schools and other settings for ministry formation and discernment, and mentorship of the newly ordained. During the conference, working groups were formed, each group devoted to intentional work around one of these themes.

Consideration of the future shape of ministry for a changing world and church will be an ongoing conversation. However, as a next step, there will be a one-day follow up meeting with conference attendees this September to check in and hold one another accountable for the working table groups.

The idea of *Incubator Parishes and Ministry Contexts* caught the imagination of Provincial Council at its spring 2023 meeting. Every diocese in Ontario has been invited to identify incubator parishes and ministries in their contexts over the coming months.

So, what is an incubator?

According to Archbishop Colin Johnson, *“It is the phenomenon of a place (parish, school) which is particularly good at identifying, encouraging, and/or nurturing new vocations for ministry, or where the priests themselves or some key lay leaders are like that.”*

Many priests, including myself, can identify the place where their own sense of vocation was named, encouraged, nurtured, and sustained. It might have been in a children’s or youth ministry setting, a parish, or in a community of individuals such as a cohort of Lay Readers. All three of these were incubators for me.

An important learning before us will be determining how we can replicate in more parishes and other settings the factors fostering the incubator phenomenon in order to encourage new vocations.

We are delighted that, at a time when vocations are declining in the Church overall, Algoma has a number of enquirers and aspirants on the path to ordination. It will be interesting to ask these aspirants whether their call came through an incubator ministry context.

Over the last few years, this Diocese has established a more robust discernment process. We have an eager postulancy committee, keen to get to know those offering themselves for ministry. All aspirants and postulants are supported on their journey by our very able pastoral chaplains: Archdeacon Linda White, Rev. Rhonda Hirst, Bishop Victoria Matthews, Rev. Heather Manuel, Canon Bob Elkin, and Canon Diane Hilpert-McIlroy. Algoma is also represented at the provincial level at the Advisory Committee for Postulants for Ordination as assessors and chaplains.

Revitalizing and Raising up Lay Readers for Ministry with People of Promise

On any given Sunday and throughout the week, Algoma’s Lay Readers can be found taking an active role in their congregation’s liturgy as lectors, intercessors, presiders, preachers, Eucharistic Assistants, and servers. They are involved in parish outreach programs, as evangelists and teachers in child and youth ministry programs, or as pastoral visitors.

Some parishes within Algoma have not had permanent full-time or part-time ordained leadership for almost a decade. In these instances, Lay Readers have truly provided a ministry of presence for those parishes and the wider community. Some Lay Readers have additional responsibilities during a parish interim and are involved in carrying out administrative roles, presiding at funerals, or providing baptismal preparation.

We owe our Parochial and Diocesan Lay Readers a debt of gratitude, commending them for their faithful ministry and their devotion to those whom they serve. Some of our Lay Readers have given their time generously for thirty years or more, with no or little remuneration.

Theological formation is a requirement to become a Lay Reader in Algoma, but there is no uniformity or standardized program. Not every Lay Reader is 'covenanted' with their incumbent and parish as required or has a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities within the life of the parish. The annual Lay Readers' conference over a two-day period is a wonderful way for our Lay Readers to connect with one another, but it is insufficient time for the kind of learning required for the vital role they play in the life of the church.

Now is the time for us to focus on revitalizing and better supporting the ministry of Lay Readers in Algoma. As the Province addresses discernment and formation for the ordained priesthood, we are also doing the same in Algoma for deacons, work that will be coordinated by the Diocesan Archdeacon, in consultation with theological schools, and the Anglican Deacons in Canada.

I am asking Archdeacon Jay to widen this scope of focus to include Lay Readers, identifying areas of training and education needed for parochial Lay Readers as well as Diocesan Lay Readers. This work will be done in consultation with the chaplain and wardens of Lay Readers, Thorneloe University, and by reviewing recent models in other Canadian Dioceses.

I ask the wardens of Lay Readers, under the coordination of the diocesan warden, in consultation with the Archdeacons and Lay Reader Chaplain, to consider how we may better discern a person's suitability and readiness to serve as a Diocesan Lay Reader, since the wardens have a responsibility to share in the Archbishop's oversight of this ministry.

I hope these initiatives will lead to an updated Lay Reader's manual along with other suitable online resources that will perform the same function as the manual, but which is suitable for our changing needs and for this time. For this step I look forward to receiving input from individuals – incumbents, Lay Readers, and parishioners from each deanery.

If something is valuable, we find a way to resource it. I ask the deaneries to take the formation of Lay Readers into account when preparing their budgets and that parishes look at available sources of funding, however small, to assist with the ongoing education, formation, and training of Lay Readers, much like the clergy receive continuing education funding.

Resourcing for the Future: The Episcopal Fund

I count it a distinct honour to be Algoma's 11th Bishop – where did the last six years go? I am delighted to serve with you in ministry at this moment of our history. I can still remember walking into Bishophurst for the first time as bishop-elect in November 2016 wondering how I would ever feel at home there, following in the footsteps of Algoma's 10 'giants', my predecessors - Frederick Fauquier, Edward Sullivan, George Thorneloe, Rocksborough Remington Smith, George Kingston, William Lockridge Wright, Frank Nock, Leslie Peterson, Ronald Ferris, and Stephen Andrews.

Each of the ten previous bishops had very distinct God-given gifts and a vision for Algoma in their time, and none were alike in personality. In spite of the differences that existed between them, they all had one thing in common: they were dreamers who imagined the gospel of Jesus Christ being proclaimed in Anglican churches in every community and town from Gravenhurst to Sudbury, North Bay, north to Temiskaming Shores, and then west along the north shore of Superior to Thunder Bay.

As the bishops travelled, they invited clergy and laity to join in mission, and through this shared ministry Algoma has seen times of enormous growth and expansion as well as some very challenging and difficult times. Each of my predecessors has left their mark on the Diocese, and I am grateful for their rich legacy.

While the attention of these bishops often needed to be trained on the daily tasks of leading the Diocese, their eyes were also on the future's horizon. We have all their hopes and dreams written not only in journals and strategic plans started during their day, but also in the lives of Christians and congregations across the generations.

At a time of decreasing income, more and more dioceses within the Communion are finding it challenging to fully fund the office of Bishop. This is one of the reasons why the Metropolitan in the Province of Ontario also serves as the diocesan bishop for Moosonee. I am proposing that we resource for the future now and work to fund the office of the Bishop of Algoma so there will always be resources to fund episcopal ministry for the Diocese.

The good stewardship of our resources means investing in what is important. In the Anglican Communion, we are episcopally-led and synodically-governed, which means the ministry of bishop is crucial to our shared witness and mission. So, let's raise funds to permanently fund the office of Bishop of Algoma, providing for the bishop's stipend, housing, and travel. We need at least \$4,000,000 to make this a reality and we already have about \$900,000 set aside for this purpose.

Our Diocesan Treasurer and I have begun an initial conversation with Dr. Scott Brubacher of the Anglican Foundation of Canada about using the Foundation as a safe and long-term investment platform for these funds.

I ask Synod to establish a small committee to begin this work of resourcing the future of the episcopacy in Algoma. I am hoping that there will be one person in each deanery who will sit on this committee. We have already come up with several ways in which we will be inviting past bishops and their families, clergy, parishes, and individuals to share in the work of fundraising for this exciting project.

Final words and thanks

Now comes the time for me to offer words of gratitude:

Firstly, my appreciation to the members of the Synod office team who support our parishes, and me, effectively and well. Liz, whose price is above rubies, whose competence is breathtaking and who knows what I need before even I know it; Canon Jane whose extraordinary knowledge of our history and her efforts in our financial department give us confidence and stability in this time; Jay whose passion for vocations and formation and love of excellence in liturgy is a gift to the diocese, the province and the national church; Jennifer our joyful and capable assistant treasurer who is already a highly regarded member of our team always willing to learn more; and Canon Ken whose knowledge and experience in diocesan property spans decades.

Thank you for all you are and all you do, and the many ways in which you go over and above the call of duty to ensure the smooth running of the synod office. I describe you as the 'engine room' of our diocese – but with a deep heart love for the church and its well being. Throughout the pandemic, and through some very difficult times you provided our diocese with the stability we needed to get us through, and we could not have done it without you.

I would like to thank our gifted Chancellor, Canon Garth O'Neill who, busy though he is with his own law practice is never too busy to give generously of his time and expertise when we call upon him with a most complicated set of circumstances; the pastoral and sensitive members of our Archbishops' Council: Archdeacons Deborah, Glen, Joan, Roberta and Kelly, and our diocesan Dean Jim who are cherished partners in prayer and ministry.

Your service to our church, which is mostly invisible to the people in our pews, and your faith in action is an extraordinary gift. Over and over again, as I am travelling throughout Algoma I hear your own gifts for ministry, and the generous way in which you serve the diocese. I know that my thanks now, echoes all of your thanks also.

Two of our Archdeacons, Roberta and Glen, retired from parish ministry last year but continue to serve in their deanery roles, and the same will be happening when Archdeacon Deborah retires from St. Paul's in the late summer. To you, and to our Dean,

who is also retiring, I wish you every one of God's blessings as a new chapter in life and faith unfolds.

To the clergy and lay leaders of the diocese – you are daily in my prayers and I do not cease to give thanks for you. I see what you do each and every day and I am aware that it is costly and sacrificial – for you and for your ever supportive families. Your ministry though, fulfills Peter's charge to eagerly tend the flock of God willingly, as God would have you do it.

And lastly, but not least, I thank God for all of you who are representing our beautiful diocese at this Synod. Bring back my greetings, the assurance of my constant prayers, and this message to your fellow labourers: *Your faith, your service and your commitment to the church and to our Lord Jesus Christ is a precious gift. You are beloved of God.*

Living As a People of Promise In and For the World

Finally, the Christian life is not about living with our hands, our hearts and minds closed, like this (close hands). Rather, it is one long process of learning to live with open hands, hearts, and minds, like this (open hands) while testifying to the hope that is within us.

It is risky to live in this way. When we do, we may be mocked or scorned by those around us when we fail in spite of our best efforts. Yet, we aim to live in such manner anyway because we live out of the conviction that, like those to whom the First Letter of Peter was initially addressed, we are named and chosen. We live out of the conviction that, though 'roaring lions' may prowl around waiting to devour us (1 Peter 5. 8), this is the only life worth living because it is the life Jesus gives us.

In a world, a society, even a church too often marked by divisiveness and mistrust, hateful language and conflict, what could be needed more than for people to see in us a sign not just pointing to, but actually participating in the life of God's kingdom, life as God intends it to be?

Like Jesus, we have been anointed with the Spirit. We are God's house, the earthly dwelling place of the Holy One, a chosen people, a royal priesthood – people of promise for today and for tomorrow.

References:

1. Heaney, Robert S.; Kafwanka, John K.; Kabia, Hilda; 2020 *God's Church for God's World: A Practical Partnership in Mission*. Church Publishing, NY.
2. Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical letter 2023.

3. **God's Church for God's World** was the theme of the 2022 Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, UK.
4. Archbishop of Canterbury Closing Address at the Lambeth Conference, August 2022
5. To share your stories about the Communion Forest email communionforestglobal@aco.org or nicholaspande@aco.org
6. Global News. Money. Craig Lord *63% of Canadian non-owners have given up on ever buying a home.*
7. Ineson, Emma. *Failure: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2023.* (2022) Fakenham Prepress Solutions. Norfolk. Pg. 161
8. APLM, *Pillar and Cloud Convictions* www.liturgyandmission.org
9. Wayman, Benjamin D, *The Christian Century: Imagining the Future of Theological Education.* February 24th, 2021