



The Diocese of Rupert's Land

The Right Reverend Donald Phillips,
Bishop of Rupert's Land

November, 2014

Post-Synod Reflections

Dear friends,

While the official record of the Acts of (Diocesan) Synod as well as the Minutes of the Synod will be available in the coming months, I found myself wanting to offer a few reflections on some of the actions and conversations from the floor of Synod. First, though, I want to offer a disclaimer. What follows does not necessarily represent the 'most important' actions of our Synod, and definitely not a complete summary. Rather I want to refer to a few of the actions and a few of things I heard from the Synod floor that I think are worth referring to for our common life and ministry into the future. (The resolutions of the Synod are on our diocesan website.)

1. Reconciliation

We passed a couple of resolutions (A-2 and A-3) on this topic – particularly as it pertains to our role (Anglican Church of Canada) in the Residential Schools. We got tangled up a little in dealing theologically with the meaning of being reconciled to God (already accomplished in Jesus Christ) and yet needing to still deal with this in the context of our relationship with God. Prior to the Synod meeting, the Executive Committee passed this resolution which (at least for me) gets to the heart of it: *THAT the Diocese of Rupert's Land commits to exploring and implementing a process in the Diocese to engage the spiritual work of repentance and reconciliation concerning indigenous peoples in Canada; and that the Executive Committee request the Bishop, in consultation with the next Diocesan Council, to implement this resolution.*

A-2 will be focused on the theological work involved, and A-3 on an appropriate public response to A-2. This is a strong and important priority for me (and I hope for all of us) which you'll be hearing more about in the near future.

2. Developing a Church for God's mission

We were blessed by an intense, challenging and hopeful presentation on missional church. This, together with my Address to Synod, resulted in several resolutions. In particular, A-5 is intended to apply the principle of 'form follows function' to the governance structures of our Diocese. A group will be formed to help us discern which structures need to be dissolved, altered or formed in order to best serve us now and into the future. A-7 empowers those gathering for 'missional conversations' (and action) to also consider developing new methods for measuring parish vitality – not merely counting numbers. However, the resolutions passed at Synod on 'missional church' are only a small part of this effort. The major thrust is in bringing together people from across our parishes to learn about and share stories about what God is doing 'in their neighbourhood.' **The next gathering is taking place at St. Paul's, Fort Garry (Winnipeg) from 10 am – noon. Everyone is welcome.**

3. Canons for Diaconal and Local Collaborative Ministry

Sometimes people see Canons as simply traditional rules that don't really help move us forward. However, drawing up a Canon for new and emerging ministries is an important way of insuring that

those ministries do, in fact, become part of the 'tradition' of the Church in our Diocese. We passed resolutions which will bring about the formation of a Diocesan Canon for the Diaconate, as well as sending memorials to Provincial and General Synod attempting to affect the same result at those levels of our Church. We also passed a resolution that will implement a review of our Canons to ensure that they enable and accommodate Local Collaborative Ministry models and structures in our Diocese.

4. Mental health in our church and society

We passed several resolutions that will promote our education about the issues of mental health; will cause us to consciously build resource and referral networks; will help our parishes become Safe Communities for all; will provide for Mental Health First Aid workshops; suggest that those planning Faith Horizons consider a theme of mental health; and create a task group to explore and develop strategies to further support this work throughout our Diocese.

5. Theological Education Commission

The Theological Education Commission (formed when St. John's College Faculty of Theology was suspended for a two-year period) gave an interim verbal report which sparked some spirited and helpful discussion on the floor. On the floor of Synod (and since then in a couple of communications I've received) questions were raised about the role (or apparent lack thereof) of those involved in formal theological education in this work of the Commission. In addition to the consultation that has occurred thus far, I have been assured that it is the intention of the Theological Commission to send out its draft report and recommendations to all of the relevant local theological institutions (and perhaps to some beyond our region) for critique and comment, prior to the report and recommendations being finalized and presented to Diocesan (and College) Council.

6. Ecclesial University project

While this was not on the agenda of our Synod, it surfaced in the context of the Theological Education Commission because of the overlap of some of the personnel involved in both. There was a concern that this project seemed to be entirely "Wycliffe College-focussed" with the subsequent need expressed for it to be much broader. I have since had communication from the primary coordinator of the Ecclesial University noting this concern, and clearly expressing that it is the desire and intention of the Ecclesial University to attend to this fact – particularly because of the diversity of students and those attending the public lectures. It should also be noted that the Ecclesial University is not a part of the work or thrust of the Theological Education Commission – with the possible exception that it may be one model that the Commission may wish to observe and comment on.

I was very impressed and pleased by the thoughtful and committed engagement I witnessed amongst the members of the Synod. People worshipped, worked and built community over the two days we were in session. I was particularly thankful for all of those who worked hard to make the gathering a success.

If you have any follow up questions and/or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In Christ,



The Rt. Rev. Donald Phillips
Bishop.