

**50th Diocesan Synod
Diocese of Algoma
September 17-18, 2021**

Response to Archbishop Anne's Charge

Introduction

Archbishop Anne has based the theme for the 50th Synod of the Diocese of Algoma on a promise made throughout Psalm 80. Psalms are songs meant to be sung and are prayers to God. Psalm 80 is a community lament in which the psalmist grieves the exile and prays for God's restorative grace. The lament ends with a promise of gratitude and thanksgiving for what God has done.

The entire charge is written as a lament which describes the harsh realities of a world-wide pandemic and its implications for each of us, for our faith communities, and for our country and the world. The pain is expressed in Archbishop Anne's clear and descriptive style which draws us into the narrative and points to a future filled with hope and with promise.

We cry, we grieve, we remember God's love, and then we plan and we act. We were touched and inspired by the careful and reflective depth articulated in the Charge and by its sensitive portrayal of key issues. Archbishop Anne reminds us that we are an Easter people and in her words "named, blessed, called, and sent by God to do God's work."

Our response draws on the key themes in the Charge and then we will be presenting seven resolutions that arise from the Charge ~ motions for synod to consider and to vote upon. These motions, if approved, will give us a concrete mechanism to move forward and to measure how well we have done. We believe in the prayerful integrity of Archbishop Anne's vision and will do everything in our power to support her continuing dreams for newness of life in Algoma.

Pandemic Overview

Thank you, Archbishop Anne, for naming the pain, struggles, suffering and grief felt in many forms these past eighteen months that we all experienced, and for naming our faithful response as God's children as the need to lament these losses.

We heard that the lament of those within our pews and the lament of those in our communities is an invitation to remember where we have been and remain in this pandemic time, as it becomes an opportunity to express our gratitude for those who have offered acts of generosity, grace, support, care and compassion, and great love of neighbour.

Throughout this pandemic we also heard the acknowledgment for those who selflessly gave and continue to give, of themselves in service to others, especially for the marginalized, isolated, sick and dying, to those suffering from poverty, violence, unemployment, access to health care and other social services benefits. Remembering especially, the doctors, nurses, first responders, service providers, friends, neighbours and strangers for their concern and kindness. Archbishop Anne encourages us to continue to offer our gratitude.

Archbishop Anne spoke of the many challenges faced by our parish leaders in terms of maintaining buildings, managing finances, navigating technology for on-line worship and the dedication to remaining connected.

As our Archbishop reminds us, we are a people of connection and are formed in our faith by our communities, therefore, let us heed the call to return to gathering in person, mindful of the protocols that continue to shape our coming together. For those not able to resume physical presence in our churches, we are encouraged to continue our on-line presence, thus this allows us to stay connected and to remain in fellowship as the church in new and innovate ways.

Thank you, Archbishop Anne for your wisdom, guidance and faithful leadership in this liminal time of where we once were to where God is leading us to be.

COVID Protocols and Vaccines

Archbishop Anne speaks to us that our prayers for God to save us from COVID were answered through the development and administration of vaccines. We have all been touched by either someone infected with the virus or themselves infected – this is a global shared experience. Archbishop Anne exhorts us to not name nor shame people for contracting the virus and that our faithful response is to pray for them and do everything we can to support and care for them.

We heard that we are not out of the woods yet and we are to remain vigilant in all our protocols concerning health and safety, this includes receiving the vaccine if you are eligible. It is respectfully requested that all clergy and lay leaders holding the Archbishop's licence, as well as parochial office holders, pastoral visitors, deanery lay stewards, Sunday school teachers and youth workers be fully vaccinated before the end of October 2021.

Archbishop Anne reminds us during this challenging time, being vaccinated is what loving our neighbours looks like now.

Thank you, Archbishop, for your wisdom and empathy for urging us to remember what loving God, loving ourselves and loving our neighbour means in our Diocese and our world today.

Post Pandemic

Archbishop Anne referred to a study we did a few years ago: “Shaped by a Living Hope”. She also reminded us that we Christians are “Easter People”.

As we think of being Easter people and shaped by that living hope of Jesus, let us imagine that as this pandemic has become a part of all of our lives that we are no longer at the Good Friday stage, but rather the Holy Saturday stage of waiting. The disciples were frightened, scattered, hiding. They were bereft, even though Jesus had tried to prepare them for his death. The resurrection had not yet occurred – would it? Well we know the answer, and as we move and live in this season of in between, we need to remember that truth. When we are frightened, we need to grasp the hand of our Jesus and continue to move forward in trust.

How has the pandemic affected our daily lives as the hands and feet of Jesus during the past 18 months? Ask yourself:

- How has it changed me as I continued to move forward loving my neighbor as myself?
- What have I learned?
- How have I responded?
- Whom have I impacted?
- Where was I visible?
- Did I make a difference?

As our keynote speaker, the Rev. Susan Beaumont, guided us through her powerful two days of sessions, talking about how to lead when we don’t know where we are going, it brought us face to face with our own human desire for comfort and control. Our desire for a return to what once was, even as we struggle to accept the changes of the present and the uncertainty of the future.

Our history, teaching, and proclamation are one of fullness and abundance provided by God to his creation. This is a time to remember these messages as we strive to be and do what Jesus wants, relying on prayer and the Holy Spirit to guide us.

As we think of the questions above, we need to remember that loving our neighbor is not just a feeling; it is a call to action. Love is an active verb. What can I do to love my neighbor? This will look different for each of us depending greatly upon where we live and with whom we interact.

- Some of us live near schools or universities
- Some of us live near poverty
- Some of us live near young families
- Some of us live near indigenous communities
- Some of us live near elderly or retirement homes

- Some of us live near great wealth

Within each of these different communities, there are lonely people - crying, struggling, despairing, and feeling hopeless. How can we as the church and as individual church members reach out in love?

As Archbishop Anne said, it can seem to be such a big job that we become frozen and unable to move at all. However, that is not what has happened in this diocese during the past 18 months. Many churches and individuals have become innovative and worked hard to keep Christ's love alive in their area and beyond. There are more ways than any of us are aware of, so let us go back to our churches and make some lists of what your church did to stay connected during this past 18 months. Also, in the coming two years as we move into different stages, keep lists to help remember what you tried that may be new, innovative or restructured. Then at our next Synod, each church could bring two cards. The first card listing all of the innovative efforts that your congregation has used to continue to "be church", which were helpful and perhaps ongoing, and a second list of the efforts that you tried that did not work as you expected. When we return in 2023, there would be many many cards, containing much of the same information, but perhaps there is a seed here or there, which would benefit us all. For the cards containing ideas that were unsuccessful, there can be a time of letting go. Perhaps a burning of those cards or a ceremony to commemorate those less successful efforts.

Renewing our commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples

We thank and praise Archbishop Mark MacDonald for his continued hopeful voice at the new revelations of residential school graves, which were unmarked and hidden. The shock and shame at the treatment of our brothers and sisters in Christ is a burden to all loving peoples. Too often when people see another in pain and do not know what to do or say, silence becomes the default. Thankfully, that is not what has happened in this situation. We commend Archbishop Anne for the actions she has already undertaken. Walking alongside and listening to the pain and anguish this discovery has brought about has been paired with concrete action.

We are thankful that there is a strong partnership and friendship between Elder Willard Pine and our Archbishop. The wisdom that Willard Pine will bring in being a Spiritual Advisor will certainly help her. And, by helping our Archbishop, she will help all of us to better understand God's hand in the relations between our communities moving forward.

We also are thankful for the appropriate commitment of the \$78,000 settlement refund money to such a worthy cause as finding any other unmarked burial sites at the former Shingwauk Residential School.

Recognizing that there is nothing we can do to change the past, we can show our support on this September 30 and each September 30 by wearing Orange. Whether we are out so that others see us or if we are home alone, let us wear orange and remember and pray for the lost children, the grieving, the hurt, the angry, and the despairing people who have been affected and continue to suffer.

Creation Care

We affirm the Archbishop's comments on the care of creation, that the words of lament echo throughout creation as evidenced by extreme climate events. This island Earth is truly in a liminal time. We need to focus on the bundle seed of stewardship. We understand our responsibilities as Christians in Archbishop Anne's reminder of our baptismal covenant and her comment, "While everyone is called to repair the world, it is only the faithful who can do it, for they alone know the purposes of the Creator." We thank Archbishop Anne for her reminder of 2019 General Synod's designation of the Season of Creation as a time to celebrate the gifts of creation and create an awareness of the climate catastrophe and the choosing of the theme for the year, "A Home for All, Renewing the Oikos of God" by the ecumenical community for the year 2021.

We urge everyone to search our resources such as found in the websites of the Anglican Church of Canada, our own Diocese, as well as Deanery newsletters to help inform their transformation into the best stewards of creation they can be. We thank Archbishop Anne for inviting Reverend Susan Beaumont for leading the workshops and giving us the tools to become leaders through this uncertain time. With these we will learn to lead with presence, lose our constructs of self and become open to the ideas of change, transforming our hearts and lives to become facilitators of the change that needs to occur.

We concur with the Archbishop that the starting point is prayer and we pray that her reminders renew our focus of energies on this most vital part of stewardship. We urge all parishes to include prayers for the environment in their liturgies and all parishioners to not only start their dialogue with God on this issue, but to continue the dialogue with their neighbours that new and creative ways will be found to help heal the planet.

Archbishop Anne's examples of viable accessible solutions that we might utilize were understandably a short list. We could add reducing your carbon footprint through carpooling, reducing thermostats, changing driving habits, and making more environmentally sound investments. Even with these, the list is far from complete and we invite everyone to add to this. We suggest a segment on the diocesan website be

developed, an environmental corner so-to-speak, to create a more comprehensible list of ideas that could be shared and added to by all parishioners in the diocese.

Of all the examples Archbishop Anne gave, her idea of a **Treebilee** was the most inspiring. We ask everyone to consider the action of planting a tree as their primary means of commemorating any special event.

Congratulations!

We join with Archbishop Anne in extending congratulations to Mrs. Frances Glover upon her well-deserved installation as Honorary Lay Canon of St. Luke's Cathedral. She is truly an inspiration to us all.

We join Archbishop Anne in extending a vote of thanks to all clergy with new appointments and pray for support through the Holy Spirit for their continued diligent work with their new parishes.

We also join with Archbishop Anne in extending congratulations to the Reverend Canon Dr. John Gibault as he celebrates the 60th Anniversary of Thorneloe University. As Archbishop Anne pointed out the University has a deep and vital connection to the Diocese in furthering the work of Jesus' Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all the Earth." At this point the University is truly in a liminal time and Reverend Canon Gibault is called upon to demonstrate the type of leadership required as outlined in Reverend Beaumont's workshops. We pray for him and all involved in the work of retaining Thorneloe University as a thriving, vital, theological institution.

Conclusion

We are bringing forward to the members of synod 7 resolutions that we believe support the themes in Archbishop Anne's charge.

As we wrote in our introduction, Archbishop Anne's Charge for this 50th Synod in September 2021 was written as a psalm of lament. She moves from addressing God, stating what is wrong in this liminal pandemic time, suggesting some actionable priorities and ending with praise, trust, and hope in our loving and faithful God.

Out of respect for her approach, we are concluding with our own Psalm of Lament for Algoma. It is based upon Psalm 80 which is a community lament. The theme of synod is the verse repeated throughout the psalm: "Restore us, O God; make your face to shine on us, that we may be saved." (Psalm 80:3,7,10). We have repeated this yearning throughout our Psalm for Algoma.

A Psalm for Algoma (based upon Psalm 80)

*Give ear, O Shepherd of Algoma, you who lead us like a flock of loyal sheep!
You who are enthroned in heaven, shine forth before people from Bracebridge to
Thunder Bay.*

Stir up your might and come to save us!

*Save us from the variants of the pandemic. Save us from homelessness and racism. Save
us from scarcity, fear, greed, and violence. Save us from anxiety and despair.*

Restore us, O God; make your face to shine on us, that we may be saved.

*O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with our complacency and
indifference? You have fed us with the bread of tears as our churches closed.*

*You make us the scorn of atheists and humanists as they laugh among themselves and
say, "Now where is your God?"*

Restore us, O God; make your face to shine on us, that we may be saved.

*You planted seeds in the hearts of our ancestors in Algoma. You drove out the darkness
and cleared the ground for the growth of vital faith communities. Crosses dominated the
landscape on top of bell towers in Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, and Huntsville.*

*Why have many of our faith communities been broken down and people are left
grieving and drifting?*

*Help us, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and see. Have regard for our dreams
and our plans. Help us grow healthy again, and bear fruit. Help us dream dreams.
Help us love our neighbours.*

*Give us your eyes and your ears to restore your garden and bring living water to the
marginalized.*

*Set us free from the bondage of discrimination and racism. Help us put the Calls to
Action into practice and develop the discipline of listening.*

*Let your hand be upon us as we imitate Christ and acknowledge that we are made in the
image of God.*

Make us strong and bless our prayers as we re-open and do ministry in a new way.

*Help us restore the gifts of creation as we build and you grow a great Green Canopy
throughout all of Algoma.*

Transform our hearts, our lives, and our minds as we support Thorneloe

God will speak peace to God's people and bless us.

Then we will never turn back from you; give us life and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O God; make your face to shine on us, that we may be saved

Respectfully submitted to the Members of this 50th Diocesan Synod,

Marcia Grawbarger, Holly Klemmensen, David White and Deborah Kraft (Chair)