



Let there be greening

ASSEMBLY 2023

CALGARY, ALBERTA

ACC GENERAL SYNOD: JUNE 27 – JULY 2
ELCIC SPECIAL CONVENTION: JUNE 28 – JULY 2

Assembly 2023 through the eyes of Algoma's delegates



Algoma's delegates to **General Synod and Assembly 2023** in Calgary from left to right:
Carol Knox, Jay Koyle, Elizabeth Green, Archbishop Anne, Nancy Armstrong

Coverage in the September edition of *The Anglican Journal* was largely devoted to reporting on Assembly and General Synod 2023 which convened in Calgary Alberta from June 27th – July 2nd of this year. The Diocese of Algoma was well served by its lay and clergy delegates Nancy, Carol, Elizabeth, and Jay who would like to offer their reflections on the gathering.

General Synod is a national governing body of the Church that is composed of bishops and delegates (“clergy” and “lay”) from every diocese. While the makeup of this body ensures a variety of viewpoints and contexts from across the Church have voice, once delegates become members of General Synod, their concern is with the well-being and activity of the whole Church National.

This year we gathered in Assembly with our full-communion partners, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Celebrating 20 years of full-communion partnership, this was the second joint assembly of both churches. During Assembly 2023 we welcomed the Moravian Church as new full communion partners.



Archbishop Linda Nicholls – Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and Bishop Susan Johnson National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

This gathering was originally scheduled for 2022 but lingering fears around the pandemic had it postponed it for a year. There were occasions when the Lutherans and Anglicans met jointly in assembly and times when we met separately for discussion and decision making on a number of issues. Anglicans discussed and voted on the terms of sitting Primates, on new liturgies for journeys of gender affirmation and transition, for peace and justice in Palestine, anti-racism to name but a few.

One of the highlights for me was simply the joy of being together with Anglicans and our Lutheran full-communion partners, from coast to coast to coast for conversations around the Gospel - that grace that is freely offered to us and revealed in the life and self-sacrificing death of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we sat together in small table groups we were enlightened by the teaching of the day and renewed in our walk with God. It was the Gospel that held us together in

the difficult conversations at Assembly 2023 and the Gospel that was celebrated in joy-filled and life-giving moments.

I am going to write about the Primatial Address which our Primate delivered on the first full day of General Synod 2023 on the theme of 'Being the Church'.

In it, Archbishop Linda reminded us about who we are at the very heart of our being and who we are called to serve. Her words and this reminder helped frame all the other discussions at Assembly because so often we get distracted by issues of governance and estranged from one another in heated debates.

"We are," the Primate said, "Anglicans who are part of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world – each one of us called into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ." Before anything else, we are baptized members of Christ's body and part of a global community. Quoting St. Paul, the Primate said we are a body that has many parts with each part essential for the building up of the church.

In her address, the Primate went on to speak about the assumptions, principles, and values of being Anglican, naming firstly that we are people of God who are created by God in and for love. Our primary purpose is to be a people who are being prepared to be sent out into the world. The Primate spoke about the faith communities represented at General Synod, stressing that no one community is more important than another.

Our call, said the Primate, is to love one another and to make and nurture disciples.

Our call is to serve one another.

Our call is to acknowledge each member's gifts and our mutual need of one another.

This, the Primate said, requires deep listening and a willingness to share resources and to support parts of the church that need assistance. It demands transparency and honest respectful conversations. It means trusting that we are all committed to the common good.

The Primate reminded us that the kind of loving service we are called into is not always easy especially when our contexts are so very different. But the primary purpose is not for ourselves, or for the Anglican Church of Canada, but for the sake of the gospel.

The Primate warned us that in these liminal times of unknowing there is a temptation to guard our resources instead of sharing them.

The Primate ended her address by saying that like so many other parts of the world Anglicans are entering a time of transformation. What is needed is an examination of our governance structures, and welcoming the self-determining indigenous church locally, regionally, internationally, and globally. I was deeply moved when General Synod received, with great applause and thanksgiving, The Covenant and Our Way of Life – the 'living' documents that will form the basis for the self-determining indigenous church in Canada. These documents were signed by delegates at June's Sacred Circle, a gathering I also had the privilege of attending.

What we know about ourselves through the pandemic is that we are resilient and capable. What we know about ourselves is that we are one in Christ, all siblings under God. What we know is this makes us accountable and committed to each other as together we **go and make disciples**.

Reflection by Archbishop Anne Germond.



Our National Anglican Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper signing The Covenant and Our Way of Life at Sacred Circle 2023

Reflection by Nancy Armstrong (Lay Delegate). Nancy lives in North Bay and attends St. Brice's Anglican Church where her husband Peter serves as the incumbent. Nancy has a heart for social justice issues, particularly against human trafficking. She is an active member of the diocesan Social Justice Committee and a facilitator of Bible based trauma healing. In June of this year, she was one of the key note speakers at the ACW Annual Conference in North Bay, speaking on healing from trauma.

“The highlights of General Synod 2023 started for me with the Lutherans and Anglicans worshipping together while belting out, ‘Oh For a 1000 Tongues to Sing My Great Redeemer’s Praise!’ We gathered together in small groups for Bible study, discussions and singing the beautiful and inspiring Holden evening prayer.

The Holy Spirit is always up to something wonderful, but I know many of us felt Him moving amongst us while at Synod. At times I am pretty sure we grieved Him, but I am also pretty sure He is delighted that we passed motions to seek common ground with the United Church, the Jewish and Muslim communities and that we are now in full communion with the Lutherans and Moravians.

Spending time with the National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop Christopher Harper was transformational for me. I learned from him what honour truly means. Then to top that off, we voted and carried the resolution to “direct the Council of the General Synod to determine what would be necessary to implement a *consensus model of decision making for future meetings of the General Synod*, drawing on existing models currently used by other churches, as well as by the Sacred Circle.”

Many more good things are in store for us as we move forward together, healing and listening lovingly to one another’s stories.

Thank you for this incredible opportunity to attend the Assembly/ General Synod 2023.
Mrs. Nancy Armstrong

Reflection by Dr. Carol Knox (Lay Delegate). Carol lives in Thunder Bay and is a member of St. Paul's Anglican Church where she serves as a Diocesan Lay Reader. Carol serves as Algoma's representative to the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, an international ministry facilitating and promoting the discipline of prayer through conferences and various resources, including the Anglican Cycle of Prayer. If you were recently ordained or confirmed you will have received a prayer plaque from Carol as a gift from the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. Most recently Carol was the co-chair of the 2023 Lay Readers' Conference (Practical Ministry Rooted in Prayer) which was held online and hosted by the Deanery of Thunder Bay-North Shore

“Assembly 2023 and General Synod was far more than a meeting to conduct the “business of the church”; for me it was definitely a spiritual gathering of people who cared about each other, the universal church and the world. The mood for this was set by Primate Linda in her opening charge, by the obvious friendship between Primate Linda and Susan Johnson of ECL and the presence of our Lutheran siblings in our table groups in joint Assembly sessions.

National Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper kept encouraging us to say to each other “I love you” when he led worship and throughout the evening session when a number of representatives of the Indigenous Church spoke and presented their Covenant and Way of Life. To end that evening session, he invited about 250 people to form one large circle and enjoy a round dance. It truly was a unifying and fun experience.

Not everyone agreed on resolutions that were presented and some that I was strongly in favour of were defeated. The Holy Spirit kept nudging me to speak with the person with whom I most disagreed. Finally, I did when I saw him sitting alone at lunch. We had a pleasant time when I asked about his diocese and he shared about the challenges there. We focused on essentials as siblings in Christ and did not bring up our very strong differences in understanding of scripture, theology, and local church practice.

Again, General Synod was a spiritual experience.

I met some old friends, made some new ones, and generally grew in my own faith as a member of the Body of Christ. Thank you for the privilege of representing Algoma.

Dr. Carol Knox



July 1st – Delegates to General Synod were invited to participate in a ‘round dance’ by our National Anglican Indigenous Archbishop Chris Harper.

Reflection by Elizabeth Green (Clergy Delegate). Elizabeth lives in Sudbury where she serves as the Incumbent for the Church of the Epiphany and as the Regional Dean for Sudbury-Manitoulin. Elizabeth is a member of the Social Justice Committee in the Diocese of Algoma. In early 2019, she received a grant from the Fred Hiltz Scholarship Fund that would enable her to participate in a Pilgrimage Course through St. George's College in Jerusalem. This fall she will travel there to participate in the "Palestine of Jesus Course." Elizabeth's reflection is on the resolution calling for peace and justice in Palestine.

“During General Synod, 2023 the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, approved a modified version of a resolution calling for peace and justice in Palestine and Israel. The resolution was drafted jointly by leaders from both churches. As a Synod Delegate, I was blessed with the opportunity to speak in favour of this important resolution. During the presentation that provided some context and background for the resolution referred to as, Peace in the Middle East, Bishop Shane Parker encouraged everyone who has traveled, or will travel, to Israel/Palestine, to “tell the world what you see.” This is what I did on the floor of General Synod.

Before I traveled to Palestine and Israel in 2017, my own knowledge of the plight of Palestinians living in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank was rather vague. It wasn't until I saw with my own eyes the illegal Israeli settlements, the blockades, the apartheid wall, and the disproportionate force and brutality inflicted upon Palestinians by Israeli soldiers on a regular basis, that I learned of the many injustices that are continually being committed against Palestinians. In what seemed to be a very fast three minutes, I was given the opportunity to share the story of my own experience, and to “tell the world” about what I both saw and heard when I travelled to the land of The Holy One.

As I listened to the discussion concerning the resolution, I felt very proud of our church for speaking out and advocating for peace, while taking a firm and equal stand against injustice by asking that:

- The Primate and the National Bishop respond to opportunities for solidarity and advocacy, including responding to specific incidents of human rights violations;
- Our churches seek ways to provide safe spaces in Canada for conversation and collaboration in pursuing truth, and working for a just and lasting peace among all people of the region.
- Our churches to decrease the presence and impact of Christian Zionism within our denominations while discerning ecumenical and civil society possibilities for greater interaction with Palestinian Christians and those of the Muslim and Jewish faith who seek a just peace in the region. <https://www.anglicanlutheran.ca/wp-content/uploads/A160-Assembly-2023-Resolution-on-Peace-and-Justice-in-Palestine-and-Israel.pdf>

It must also be noted that during this portion of General Synod, we likewise acknowledged and upheld the Jewish people and organizations who advocate for peace and who are opposed to the occupation. Thorough and very thoughtful consideration was given to the long history of Jews living in Israel. It was also made very clear that the resolution for Peace in the Middle East was about opposition to the extreme actions of the government of Israel, and not at all about Judaism or the Jewish people. The resolution that was carried was solely about the actions of wrong-doing on the part of the Israeli government. Through the passing of this resolution, the Anglican Church of Canada has spoken against such wrong-doing which inflicts an enormous amount of harm on a people living under severe conditions of oppression.

Archbishop Linda Nicholls, Primate for the Anglican Church of Canada addressed the Israeli and Palestinian conflict firmly and most eloquently when she said,
“There is pain on all sides of this conflict, and this is a particular moment in time when we’re raising up the pain of one side but can never ignore the pain of the other side, and never talk about this without the reality that there is violence on both sides at the moment. There is a disproportionality in the violence that is part of why we need to speak now.”

God willing, I will be traveling to Jerusalem again in October of this year, when I will embark on a Pilgrimage course offered through St. George’s College, known as ‘Palestine of Jesus’. While I am there, I intend to refer daily to *Peace in the Middle East*, the resolution that was carried by General Synod.

In all of our learning and growing awareness of the history and present-day issues concerning Palestine and Israel, the land of The Holy One, I pray that in our diocese’s commitment to address and uphold *Peace in the Middle East*, we will affirm the need to listen to the church leaders in Jerusalem and throughout the region.

I pray that with God’s help, we will give voice, and tell the world what we see in the land of The Holy One.

Faithfully submitted, Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Green

Reflection by Jay Koyle (Clergy Delegate). Jay lives in Sault Ste. Marie and serves as the Diocesan Archdeacon and Executive Officer for the Diocese of Algoma with responsibilities for formation for ministry – lay and ordained. Jay also serves as the part time incumbent for St. James Anglican Church in Goulais River. With a passion for congregational development and liturgy Jay has a heart for teaching. This November Jay will facilitate a weekend workshop, ‘ReStorying the church’ at Villa Loyola. This initiative 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.

“I entered General Synod with a keen awareness that what happens in this gathering has significant impact on the life and witness of The Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC), globally, nationally, ecumenically, regionally, and at the grassroots congregational expression of church, even if this impact is not always perceived in the parish pew.

I was delighted that our gathering this year ensured this wide scope of impact was evident. Many of our sessions were held in partnership with Assembly delegates of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), our full communion partners. We joined, too, with The Episcopal Church in their partnership with The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Both the ACoC and the ELCIC entered into full communion with The Moravian Church, one of the oldest

Protestant Churches in Western Christianity. We recognized the many inter-religious involvements we have in Canada and beyond.

Our seating was arranged to ensure we entered into conversation and had ample opportunity to listen to other delegates and guests, and to give prayerful consideration to discerning the next steps God's Spirit is prompting us to take. There were also "live" and video presentations, of which the latter are available at anglican.ca, highlighting the work of the ministries of the General Synod and its various departments, the Anglican Foundation of Canada, and the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

Many important matters to which the Gospel speaks commanded our time and decision-making: creation care, dismantling racism, promoting peace in various areas of conflict, to name a few.

There are two areas to which I wish to speak briefly in my report. One concerns discipleship formation. This aim was both directly and indirectly addressed throughout the proceedings of General Synod. For example, since Anglican Tradition presumes 'common prayer' is the central mode of formation in the Christian life, not only was spending time together in worship vital to our gathering, but we also attended to authorizing rites and lectionary enhancements to augment the resources that shape our liturgical life. Many of these passed with little discussion. However, a significant focus was directed to *Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Affirmation and Transition*.

The resolution to authorize *Pastoral Liturgies for Journeys of Gender Affirmation and Transition* was a question addressed by both Archbishop Anne and me in the assembly. To both of us, this matter represented potentially a matter of life and death for many people, leading us to speak strongly in favour of the authorization of these rites. Many youth find themselves living in fear, bullied, and enduring mocking or physical abuse. Their daily experience is the polar opposite of any kind of personal affirmation or acceptance. Moreover, research cited by CMHA shows LGBTQ2S+ youth face approximately fourteen times the risk of suicide and substance abuse than their heterosexual peers.

The Archbishop spoke with deep conviction about her own pastoral experience and how it indicates that holy space needs to be provided in the church's life. I echoed her convictions and added that the authorization of these rites would not be simply the church being "generous" to the individuals for whom they were designed. Rather, since the liturgy aims to form the whole company of the baptized, it was vital for all of us that these be included in our library of pastoral rites.

The final note I wish to sound in my reflection is simply to say the self-determining Indigenous Church in the midst of the wider ACoC is cause for great hope. We hear a great deal these days about how the Church's days are numbered and we will soon be extinct. When I see the vibrancy of the indigenous members of our Church, however, I am confident our future is bright indeed. The leadership and example of Archbishop Chris Harper, and so many others, was not only inspiring, but also served as a vision of how things can be different. In fact, attention will be devoted to what can be learned and adopted from the procedures of the Sacred Circle as consideration is given to revising those of General Synod in future years.

I thank the Synod of Algoma for entrusting me to serve as one of Algoma's representatives in General Synod. I look forward to doing so again in 2025 and will once again prepare and serve on your behalf to the best of my ability."

The Ven. Dr. Jay Koyle.

A prayer for the mission of God's Church.

God of all,
Draw your church together into one great company of disciples, together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving Him in His mission to the world, and together witnessing to His love on every continent and island, particularly in our country of Canada.
(BAS Pg. 676)