**Appendix #2**

Report of the Archbishop’s Charge Committee – Diocesan Synod

May 11th, 2019

***Thanksgiving***

Where else to begin in a response to such a charge other than with thanksgiving? Archbishop Anne, you are, indeed, our “Barnabas Bishop.” For those who might have missed the reference, Barnabas was a prominent leader in the early church who earned such a reputation for encouragement that he, originally called John, became known as Barnabas, which means, “Son of Encouragement.” In this your charge to Synod 2019, you, Archbishop Anne, have encouraged us with so many seedlings of faith, hope, and love. We think the nickname fits the bill.

***Seed Bundles 2019-2021***

*We affirm* the wisdom in continuing to carry forward the seeds of stewardship, reconciliation, community building, and discipleship as priority areas for our parishes over the next two years. We call to mind the title of one of Eugene Peterson’s books, A Long Obedience in the Same Direction. These four practices are always in season for God’s people, but they take time. It may be that some congregations will take another step in the intentional pursuit of one or more of these seeds, while other congregations are only now beginning to catch the vision of the seed bundle. In both cases, even though some seeds may not implant, more time steeped in these priorities can only bear good fruit in the long run.

***Algoma’s Financial Future***

*We affirm* the Archbishop’s desire to appoint a task force to take a careful and creative look at the possibilities for Algoma’s financial future. We commend the courage on the part of the Administration and Finance Committee and the Synod Office staff, seen on full display in their determination to find every efficiency possible even in a climate of already overstretched resources. We believe that, as financial truth-tellers, they have set an example for all of our congregations and parishes, many of which already have or will soon need to face similar realities. We give particular thanks for our Executive Archdeacon, The Ven. Harry Huskins, for the personal sacrifice he is willing to make toward the goal of longer term financial sustainability.

While we commend all of this, we have also heard during coffee breaks in this Synod that people are concerned about our Diocesan staff being chronically expected to do more with less. We do not want anyone at any level of our governance to burn out. For this reason, we encourage all members of our congregations to think twice before calling the Synod Office with a problem that could be reasonably addressed at the parish or deanery level. We know, and appreciate, that there is always an open door. However, we want to do our part to relieve as much pressure as possible on those who work so hard on our behalf.

Archbishop Anne, you demonstrate for us the skill of managing that tricky balance between realism and faith, calling our attention to the seriousness of the numbers while also reminding us that growth and new life can, by God’s grace, spring up from the most unexpected of places. When it comes to giving small grants for nurturing our seed bundles, we as your response committee also feel that tension. Grants are wonderful gifts and can go far. However, some on our committee also wonder whether this is an appropriate time for a new grant program, however small, because of this Synod’s movement toward budget restraint. Many of these seeds can be watered for free, using assets and resources we already have, such as church halls for Bible studies and stewardship programs already on offer from, as Archbishop Hiltz says, the “church national.” We think too of our ongoing relationship with the Diocese of Tarime, and wonder how we might be further inspired to plant and water seeds even in a climate of scarcity – perceived or actual.

***Restructuring and Reconciliation***

*We affirm* the need for healing and reconciliation for so many of our clergy and laity who have been, are being, or will be affected by church closures and other restructuring efforts throughout Algoma. Reconciliation has become a word most closely associated with our relationships as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and of course, that aspect of reconciliation matters greatly. Yet reconciliation, as one of the four items in our seed bundle, extends into all our relationships. We need, in various pockets of the Diocese, reconciliation between clergy and clergy, congregations and congregations, even between parishes and our Diocesan leaders. Sometimes relationships have broken down because of simple misunderstandings run amok. Sometimes we have been careless with our words and actions and sinned against one another. Restructuring is almost impossible to keep casualty free, because change is so difficult. Even when the majority agrees that a change must be made, and even when closures are handled with sensitivity, hurt feelings, grief, and anger can linger and become destructive. But even in the most difficult circumstances such as church closures and personnel changes, Jesus says the world will recognize us as His by the way we love one another. What will it take to restore what has been broken? Is it formal mediation? A deliberate choice to repent and to forgive? To let things, as the prayer attached to your charge describes, remain imperfect? We call to mind the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: **“**Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” This Bible verse is just one example of how our faith resources us richly for this task, and we thank our Archbishop for drawing our attention to its importance in our life together.

***Preparing for General Synod 2019***

*We affirm* the need to listen to one another, both in the kingdom cause of reconciliation and as a preventive spiritual practice so that we can become the kind of church that is better able to weather the storms when they come. Archbishop Anne, you devoted much of your charge to the preparation for this summer’s General Synod, and the proposed amendment to the marriage canon. While we do not have a specific motion to make in regard to General Synod as this response group, we do want to uplift your words to us about walking together. Sometimes it must seem to you, Archbishop Anne, that it’s just one storm after another. But we take to heart your encouragement that as we commit to staying in mutually respectful conversation on this issue, and on whatever the issue will be next time, we will find the church enriched. Indeed we are not a private club, or a loose collection of acquaintances, or even just a family. We are the body of Christ and our decisions, big and small, affect our common well-being.

***Indigenous Ministry***

*We affirm* and celebrate the increase in Indigenous expressions of ministry throughout our Diocese and commend the documentary “Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands, Strong Hearts” to all our deaneries and congregations. We suggest that the Deanery Officials report to Diocesan Executive at the fall meeting how many congregations have engaged this publication, and how reactions to it may help us take one more step toward reconciliation. Further, we have heard during this Synod that many were enlightened by the Kairos blanket exercise, and we commend its use, rightly administered, in all our deaneries as one means towards increased education and empathy.

***Formation for Ministry***

Finally, in theological education, *we affirm* the value of robust formation for those discerning a call to ordained leadership. We look forward to hearing more about the discussions held at OPCOTE (Ontario Provincial Commission on Theological Education) and we would be especially glad if the Pastoral Chaplains in each deanery could be kept up to date, as they are one of the first points of contact for inquirers.

***Conclusion***

And so Archbishop Anne, our Barnabas Bishop, we offer this brief response to your wonderful charge. We echo your heart’s desire that we might all learn to “bend” toward one another, knowing that we are not all the same, and that’s okay, but that we can also choose to move beyond mere tolerance toward sincere and genuine love. You encourage us regularly, not only with your words, cards and thoughtful gifts, but also by your willingness to stand in the breach and be that instrument of unity we so desperately need at this time in the life of our Diocese and in the life of our wider Church. Holding that tension for all of us must be a difficult thing for you. We are praying for you. We are grateful.

Respectfully Submitted:

Rev. Kelly Baetz, Chair

Miss Emma Hart

Mrs. Beverly Vanderjagt

Rev. Pamela Rayment

Mr. Colin Dennis

***Motions from the Bishop’s Charge Response Group are contained in the Journal of Proceedings.***