

ARCHBISHOP'S CHARGE



*We plant a seed that will one day grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.
Oscar Romero*

by
**The Most Reverend Anne Germond
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ARCHBISHOP OF ALGOMA

TO THE FORTY-NINTH SESSION

OF THE

SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF ALGOMA
Anglican Church of Canada

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

May 9, 2019



Archbishop Anne Germond's Charge to the 49th Synod of the Diocese of Algoma

ARCHBISHOP ANNE GERMOND*

May 9, 2019

Dear friends in Christ,

Heaven and Earth Have Been Gathered!

I greet you in the name of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, and extend a warm welcome as the Forty-ninth Synod of the Diocese of Algoma is convened. It's actually pretty unbelievable that two years has gone by since I last stood in this place. It's been a steep learning curve for this new bishop and the road a bit windy at times, but I have come to discover more and more about the treasure that is Algoma. Last year brought some new responsibilities and I am thankful for your prayers and encouragement along the way – they mean the world to me.

I pray that our common life will be enriched by our time here and that our deliberations will be of benefit to our beloved church as we continue to grow together in faith. For some of you this is your very first Synod and I would like to invite you to stand so that we may greet you as you join the councils of the church. It can all seem a little overwhelming but I want to assure you that you are among friends and we will do all we can to make you feel at home.

1. WELCOME TO SYNOD GUESTS

We have several honoured guests here with us. Archbishop Fred Hiltz, our Primate. Your Grace, your generous and faithful leadership as our Primate is a model of servant leadership for the church, and your presence in the last very busy days of your Primacy a gift to us. We will have occasion to thank you for your ministry more formally on Friday evening at the reception in Bishophurst, but, in the meantime we are looking forward to all of your presentations and reflections, which we know will nourish our weary post-Easter souls.

Bishop Michael Oulton and the General Synod delegates from the Diocese of Ontario – thank you for making the road trip to Northern Ontario. You know how much those of us who attended your Synod last November got out

of it. In just a couple of days we forged new friendships which we pray will be long-lasting. I'd also like to welcome The Rev. Dr. Chris Brittain, Dean of Trinity College in Toronto who will be leading one of the breakout groups on the Anglican Communion this afternoon, and to representatives from PWRDF and the Anglican Foundation of Canada who will be joining us later this week. I did extend an invitation to the Rev. Dr. John Gibaut – who has just returned to Canada from England to take up his new duties as the President and Provost of Thorneloe University. He was unable to join us but I look forward to welcoming him officially to Algoma soon.

I'm grateful for those from within the diocese who will be offering leadership in this synod – the Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle, the Rev. Dr. Bill Steadman, the Rev. Beth Hewson, The Rev. Pam Rayment, Mrs. Nancy Armstrong and Mrs. Sue Robineau for leading the breakout groups on liturgy and church growth, human

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trafficking, and the Blanket Exercise. And a special thanks to the Synod office and Cathedral staff and Committee Chairs who have been working hard to prepare for this gathering.

2. CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER...

Last evening's opening service at St. Luke's Cathedral was truly a 'Eucharist' – service of thanksgiving, as the Rev. Dr. Patti Brace was ordained as a presbyter and as we welcomed five new Canons into the Diocesan family. The Canons come from very different backgrounds and deaneries within Algoma, but over the years have offered the best gifts of their hearts and represent countless hours of dedicated and faithful service to the Church. In each one, when you get to know them, is a veritable treasure trove of gifts.

When I contacted them about conferring the title and honour of 'Canon', the response from each was the same – "Bishop, I haven't done anything to deserve this, I can't possibly accept the honour."

Over the years the Rev. Canon Rosalie Goos has offered workshops on stewardship and parish development in most of the 100 congregations in all five deaneries, thus enabling people to discover their own spiritual gifts. Many of the people who attended them are in leadership positions in our diocese or in dioceses around the Canadian Church. I remember the way she encouraged us to learn new hymns from Common Praise to beautify our Sunday worship. Canon Rosalie can be found in any number of our congregations in Algoma deanery on a Sunday morning, where she is much loved.

Canon Hugh Mackenzie is a member of All Saints in Huntsville where he serves as the Incumbent's warden. In the wider church he has offered his managerial skills to chair two 'Bishop's Appeal Campaigns' in Algoma, as well as co-chairing the most recent Strategic Plan with Archdeacon Deborah Kraft. Canon Hugh has served for so many years on the

Diocesan Executive Committee, most recently as the Bishop's appointee, that records in the Synod office don't actually have a start date! His own recollection is that he has served on it forever.

A long time member of Trinity Parry Sound, Canon Betty Whetham has served as the Parish Treasurer for a number of years. With an amazing head for figures and a willingness to ask those difficult questions about the stewardship of our resources, Betty has served on the Renewal in Mission Task Force in 2005, as a member of the Muskoka Deanery Assessment Team, and most recently as the Lay Steward for Muskoka Deanery. Although her time in this position has ended Betty will continue serving the church as the Chair of the Grants Board for the Muskoka Ministry Endowment Fund.

The Honourable Justice Canon John Wright is a member of St. Michael and All Angels in Thunder Bay. Over the years he has served on a number of Diocesan committees including the Matrimonial Commission, the Heritage Committee for seven years, and the Executive Committee. He was elected as Registrar of the Diocese and served as Chancellor of the Diocese for six years, a member of the Canons and Constitution committee over 15 years and as President of the Diocesan Court over 11 years. Canon Stephen Mallinger has served exceptionally as Choir Director and organist at St. Luke's Cathedral for over 25 years. He is always readily available to assist with music ministry for Synod, Clergy Conferences, Ordinations and any special services happening in Sault Ste. Marie for the Diocese. His talent as a musician and his experience as a choirmaster are exceptional and we are grateful for his contributions to the life of the Diocese and also in the wider community of Sault Ste. Marie.

I'm the Bishop who is privileged to confer the honour and title of Canon on each of these wonderful men and women, but I do it on behalf of former bishops who extended that first invitation to become involved in the wider church, who are thankful you said 'Yes'.

3. SEEDS IN A BUNDLE

Having completed the introductions I want to return to the image of the 'Sacred Bundle' that I spoke about in my Charge to Synod in 2017. For those of you who missed it – When the Indigenous People of North America were nomadic, moving from place to place, they carried a bundle with them as a reminder of who they were. *"Each object in the bundle – seeds, a feather, an ear of corn, carried within itself a story."* (*"Transforming Stewardship"* by C.K. Robertson, Church Publishing, Inc. 2009) When community members came together with their elders the bundle was opened and each object pointed to, talking about why it was important. By sharing their story through the objects in the bundle community members reminded themselves of who they were – their heritage, their purpose, and their renewed vision for the future. Because they had to travel such long distances there could only be so many items inside the bundle, so they had to focus on what was important. I invited us to carry the three seeds of *Discipleship, Stewardship, and Reconciliation* in our 'Sacred Bundle' in the years between Synods. Then I asked Synod to name a fourth one. You came up with *Community Building* to complete the 'Sacred Algoma bundle'.

In thinking about those seeds in our bundle and how I've witnessed firsthand so many of them taking root across Algoma, I want to thank you for the efforts that have gone into growing them, and for bringing them as an offering to last evening's Eucharist. I intend to read each one and to write to you as your 'Barnabas Bishop' encouraging you to keep nurturing those new shoots. I chose my motto for 2019 with this in mind.

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people; The people I formed for myself that they might declare my praise." (Isaiah 43: 19, 20b,

21)

Jesus' Parable of the Sower in Matthew's Gospel (Chapter 13) relates very well to our seeds in a bundle – *"What do you make of this?"* says the Jesus of Eugene Peterson's *The Message*. *"A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed some of it fell on the road, and birds ate it. Some fell on the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled by the weeds. Some fell on good earth, and produced a harvest beyond his wildest dreams. Are you listening to this? Really listening?"*

None of the seeds I invited us to carry over the last two years are easy ones to plant, nurture or grow. Being a follower of Jesus isn't easy – it's a cross-shaped life that is demanding, sacrificial, and at times very unrewarding. In spite of our best efforts people don't respond to our invitations to join in with bible studies or that amazing program we worked so hard to develop. Even when we knew we had the perfect soil conditions with the right pH, the word still failed to implant. I wonder how many preachers out there spent long hours working on a sermon only to have someone comment as they left – "I really couldn't connect with you today." One of my favourites after preaching is: "I really liked the parts I was awake for."

The Orthodox icon on the cover of this Charge depicts the Sower of that parable haphazardly throwing seeds behind him, hardly looking at where they are landing. We know from our reading of the passage that some of the seed landed on very unproductive, even hostile landscapes. We really have to wonder about the foolish agricultural practices of this farmer at a time when there was a scarcity of seed to begin with. The logical place to sow seed, is always on good soil, and we Christians readily take this message to heart.

Jesus knew that the seed of his teaching would not always fall on perfect soil, but on rocky, weed infested, ground. His closest disciples often didn't 'get it' and lost faith, blowing hot and cold throughout his ministry. The

Pharisees wanted to choke him out, and even his nearest and dearest in his hometown rejected him. On Good Friday things looked pretty bleak for him and his followers. But Easter Sunday happened and at Pentecost a new community called the church was born. This is the church we are part of shaped by the faithful witness of those before us.

But there were struggles. It wasn't easy being a Christian in first century Palestine, because of widespread persecution which was compounded by the abject poverty of the time. The new church was struggling to survive with false prophets springing up all over the place. While the flinging of seed on every soil may seem random and haphazard, Jesus was reminding his followers then, and us today, that just because the seeds didn't appear exactly in the way they had expected or hoped for, that didn't mean the message was wrong, or that their best efforts had gone to waste.

In spite of this random sowing of seeds, the Gospel took root in the most likely places but also in hearts which had been given up for lost. Who'd have thought that Paul, persecutor of Christians would end up being one of the main instruments God used to 'bring God's name before the Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel.' (Acts 9.15)

In our lives in Christ we can keep staring at the rocky outcrops wondering how some great thing could have gone sideways, or we can allow our hearts to be transformed by God and become agents of God's grace – people who are able to shift our gaze from the rocks or the thorny ground to good soil. Instead of bemoaning something that didn't turn out well in spite of our best efforts we can pay attention to where new life and growth is sprouting, name and celebrate it. We can learn to let go of bad outcomes or those areas which are completely barren. And always, we can keep spreading seed extravagantly. If we can do this and remain faithful, in time I believe we will see a miraculous yield. Why? Because we are only the agents through whom God works. Ultimately all growth comes from God. To Him be the glory.

This is why I'm going to ask that we continue to carry the same four seeds in our sacred bundle over the next two years and that we deepen our understanding of them so that they flourish even more. Without understanding, the word finds no place to implant and the evil one who is always hovering close by is ready to snatch those precious seeds away. Also necessary are attentiveness and perseverance, which many of Jesus' parables in Matthew urge us to practice.

In the last two years of my episcopacy I have witnessed firsthand miraculous new growth in places I least expected to find it. Some of the most heartwarming encouraging moments happened in my meetings with Confirmation candidates and new disciples whom I met in small groups on parish visits. To listen to young people and mature adults describing a new found faith just blew me away. At the Primate's suggestion I invite all confirmation candidates to write a letter telling me about their faith journey. I have them all in a file and treasure them. In thinking about the seed of Community Building – CLAY 2018 in Thunder Bay was awesome! The other area where I have seen tremendous growth is in the ministries with Indigenous people which are happening around the diocese, but are especially true in Thunder Bay-North Shore at St. Paul's and in Sudbury-Manitoulin at the Church of the Ascension. In January 2019 the Rev. Lana Grawbarger was ordained as a Deacon in the church in a beautiful ceremony in Garden River. Archdeacon Deborah Kraft and I were delighted to host a visit from Mr. Bill and Mrs. Caro Rathbone from the New England Company last fall and they were impressed with everything they saw and experienced. The Blanket Exercise which we will participate in this evening is happening as a special request from the Lay Readers of our diocese. Please add the documentary: 'Doctrine of Discovery: Stolen Lands, Strong Hearts' to your church libraries.

I would also like to acknowledge and give thanks for the outstanding reports from the two Committees which were formed at our

last Synod – the one on M.A.I.D and the Addictions Committee. Thank you for the many hours of work that went into preparing these reports. They will now become part of a growing resource for our members as we gain in knowledge and understanding of the complexity of both of these matters which are having a big impact on our lives as Anglicans.

‘Seeds for the Kingdom’

In order to encourage congregations to try new initiatives by growing the four seeds of Discipleship, Stewardship, Reconciliation and Community Building in their parishes, I would like to suggest that the diocese fund small grants – “Seeds for the Kingdom” for the next two years, which may be used for any number of projects. *“Faith is a gift of God, and fruitful discipleship is the work of God in us.”* (Gary Peluso-Verdend)

4. REORGANIZATION; COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS AND CHANGE

Since we last gathered for Synod there have been a number of realignments around the diocese, all necessary, as Algoma, like so many churches around the Anglican Church of Canada deals with shrinking budgets, declining attendance and aging congregations. Some of the changes in Algoma have come about as a result of intentional conversations between congregations who realized the need to bring their most valuable resources together – their people, the body of Christ – in order to be a sustainable and viable congregation in the future. Of necessity some have let go of their houses of worship because the cost of keeping them open were draining precious funds from their mission and ministry. Some congregations began working more closely with neighbouring denominations in shared ministries. I am grateful for some growing partnerships with friends in the Lutheran Church and the United Church. Other realignments happened as a result of a motion from the Executive Committee following a period of lengthy discernment

with Deanery Officials and the parish. While all of it has all been necessary, none of it has been easy. Many of our parishioners have found the change that has come about challenging and difficult to accept. I want to commend Gathering Table in Thunder Bay, Holy Trinity in Sault Ste. Marie, St. Saviour’s Blind River, St. James Goulais River, Trinity All Saints Bala, St. James Gravenhurst, St. Thomas’ Bracebridge, All Saints’ Huntsville, Emsdale – Almaguin, Lake of Bays, all summer points, as well as The Island Parishes of Manitoulin for your willingness to try a different way to be the church in changing times. Thanks also to Jay Koyle and the Deanery officials for their efforts in facilitating the meetings and conversations.

A huge piece of work over the last three years has been the reorganization in Muskoka which has mostly taken place under the leadership of the Muskoka Ministry Transition Team who were mandated by the Executive Committee. MMTT is made up of the Chair – the Rev. Kelly Baetz, and members the Ven. Joan Locke, the Rev. Dr. Bob Derrenbacher, and Ms. Annette Procnier. They were ably assisted by the generosity of the Rev. Canon Beth Benson from the Diocese of Toronto, whom Kelly describes as having ‘holy imagination’ for the church. MMTT’s motto for their time was to ‘Lead with Love’ and they embodied this as they visited parishes and worked with congregations involved in the realignment.

I would like to concur with the March 2019 Executive Motion:

That this Executive Committee express our heartfelt thanks to the Muskoka Ministry Transition Team for their hard work over the past three years on the re-organization and re-structuring of parishes in the Muskoka Deanery. Executive acknowledges that this has been a challenging task at times and appreciates the Committee members’ perseverance, creativity, wisdom, and clarity.

And I would like to thank all of the con-

gregations who've undergone changes for making the changes that were asked of you, recognizing how difficult it was for you to say goodbye to a much loved priest or church property. Thank you to The Rev. Heather Manuel, the Rev. Chris Davis, the Ven. Dawn Henderson and the Rev. Kelly Baetz for adapting to the changes. I pray that you are already or will soon see signs of new life and hope as a result of the realignments and that where there was hurt, that healing will begin. In reading MMTT's report in the Convening Circular you will notice that while two of the regions have been realigned there remain two others which have not.

With the concurrence of the Executive I will be asking MMTT to extend their mandate in order to work together with the congregations in Regions 3 and 4 on possibilities for their regions. It would be good for the change to happen and bubble up from the grassroots level rather than from the Executive Committee down.

5. STEWARDSHIP OF DIOCESAN RESOURCES

Whilst on the subject of change and difficult decisions, I want to speak about the stewardship of our resources, particularly with respect to the diocesan finances. Many of you attended the Spring 2019 Deanery Council meetings in which our Diocesan Treasurer, Jane Mesich, presented the Budget for this year and a glimpse of the financial projections for the next two years. The declining numbers that we are seeing in Algoma reflect what is happening in the Anglican Church of Canada. The most recent complete statistics show a decline in the average weekly attendance of between 48-51% – between the years 2001 – 2017. Algoma numbers show that our decline is around 46%. This has resulted in a significant loss of revenue from the apportionment – which is the bulk of diocesan income. Last year we had to dip into our reserves to the tune of about 180K which is unsustainable in the long term.

While figures are a second order question – the first order being how we are helping our people to have a relationship with a living God, they are real and unavoidable. Over the last several months there have been some tough conversations between the Treasurer and myself and the Administration and Finance Committee to begin looking at ways of cutting costs and increasing our revenue stream. On Friday you will be hearing about some of them for your feedback and suggestion. Even though the Synod office staff is already working to capacity we will have to reduce one staff position in the Synod office. I wish to extend my thanks to the Executive Archdeacon, Harry Huskins, for his graciousness in agreeing to retire in June 2020 to allow this to happen.

We could allow ourselves to focus on the loss and diminishment of resources, the rocky soil of the Parable of the Sower, but instead I would like us to use this as a God given opportunity to remake a sustainable diocese for the long term.

The properties that we are divesting ourselves of need to be re-examined so that the funds can be used for general purposes. Other options might include removing restrictions on designated funds, reviving the Episcopal Endowment Fund so that the office of Bishop of Algoma is perpetually funded, rationalizing costs for resourcing governance, and evaluating the apportionment system. Following a recommendation from Ms. Susan Abell, a consultant from Toronto who spent time with me, the Dean and the Synod office staff last fall, and with the retirement of Archdeacon Huskins, there also needs to be a reworking of the job descriptions for Synod office staff.

I am recommending to Synod that a "Task Group on the Financial Future of Algoma" be established to gather information and consider options for cutting costs and increasing revenue streams over the next three to five years. One of the recommendations that we have already undertaken came out of the MMTT's work and is related to the number of properties that Algoma owns, and which

have long standing issues relating to them which make them difficult to sell or transfer. We have already freed up some funding to create the position of "Property Coordinator for Algoma" and I have appointed Mr. Ken Lawson to serve in this capacity. There are a number of properties already being worked on and we anticipate that Mr. Lawson will be busy for two years. Welcome Ken.

Ultimately the Executive Committee will be responsible for making the decision regarding Algoma's budget and financial future. Please keep them in your prayers during this time of discernment and be assured that no changes will take place without proper consultation, and that I will be involved in that consultation process.

6. VOCATIONS AND RECENT ORDINATIONS.

Just prior to Synod a gathering of postulants for ordination and clergy in the first five years in their ministry took place here in the Soo. I remember how formative these Early Ministry Conferences were for me in learning about the way things happen in Algoma as well as providing opportunities to network with other clergy. Congratulations to the Rev. Dr. Patti Brace, ordained to the priesthood last evening, and to Mrs. Bev Vanderjagt who, God willing, will be ordained as a deacon in June, and the Rev. Sarah Armstrong who, God willing, will be priested early in the fall.

In addition to these new ordinands and postulants in ministry there are a number of new enquirers who are coming forward to discern whether they are being called into ordained ministry. This is very exciting in a time when vocations are in decline in the church, and more so because they are all involved in ministry in their home parishes and are being locally raised. The Rev. Dr. Jay Koyle will be assuming the portfolio of Ministry Formation in Algoma – thank you to Archdeacon Huskins for his faithful work in this for many years. I'm grateful for the

Deanery Pastoral Chaplains for their help and support in working with enquirers and postulants and to the clergy for identifying potential ordinands and providing them with opportunities to test their vocations.

In the coming year the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario will be hosting a Conference about vocations for this time in the life of the church and it is likely to be key in determining formation of ordained ministry in the future. All of the Divinity Schools in Ontario will be represented, together with the Bishops of the Province and a representative from Algoma. Typically, the Master of Divinity program offered in a seminary setting has been the preferred route for ordination preparation, but this is no longer the case as each diocese has its own context and setting. What we are all certain about is that formation is key, especially as many enquirers are coming to us from other denominations. A clear understanding of our polity and governance is an essential component of all formation.

7. GENERAL SYNOD 2019

In July of this year Archdeacon Deborah Kraft, the Rev. Aidan Armstrong, Mr. Gilles Tessier, Canon Hugh Mackenzie, Mr. Jakob DeVries and I will travel to Vancouver for General Synod. The chosen theme: "*I Have Called You By Name*" (Isaiah 43.1) are words of assurance to an exiled people that the ever loving, possessive and protective God has not abandoned them. Isaiah's language in that chapter is emphatic – serving to remind God's chosen ones of the strong connection God has with his people. – "I am the Lord your God." (43.3); "I have redeemed you" (43.1b); "I will be with you" (43.2); "I love you." (43.4).

As we approach General Synod these words are a beautiful reminder of who and whose we are. Ultimately, we belong to God. This beloved church of ours belongs to God.

The General Synod delegates and I have spent a great deal of time together already, and in planning for Algoma's Synod the organizing

team wanted to be certain that everyone is given the opportunity to learn more about what will be taking place at General Synod where there will be a Primatial election, the Second Reading of the Proposed Amendment to the Marriage Canon and discussion about the self-determining Indigenous Anglican Church – amongst other things.

The Plenary Session this morning is dedicated to General Synod and this afternoon you are invited to attend the Breakout Groups where you can meet the delegates from Algoma and Ontario, as well as one of the nominees for the Primacy, Bishop Michael Oulton.

Dr. Chris Brittain's presentation this afternoon will focus on the Anglican Communion, particularly with respect to relationships between the provinces as we wrestle with differing views on matters of human sexuality. I commend his book, *"The Anglican Communion on the Crossroads"* to you. On Friday Archdeacon Harry Huskins will be explaining the motion going before General Synod for its second reading, and later you will have the opportunity for discussion in small table groups.

Following General Synod in 2016 the Primate referred the proposed amendment to the Marriage Canon back to individual dioceses. If it passes it would, with the consent of the diocesan bishop, grant permission for clergy to perform same-sex marriages in our church. A Holy Listening exercise and process was developed for use around the diocese. We engaged in this at the Executive Committee level and at last year's clergy conference and it proved to be very helpful and I have since then received excellent feedback from deaneries and congregations. While those who are most passionate about this issue would say that we have not engaged as well as we could have or should have in Algoma, I know that people are having one on one conversations with others and that when General Synod ends on July 16th, that those conversations will continue.

As your bishop I would like to share some of what I have heard with respect to the proposed change to the Marriage Canon in

my travels around Algoma and as I've been in conversation with Algomites and the General Synod delegates. *"The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them."* *"Just as to love God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them."* (Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Life Together*)

As I have been listening I heard that:

- There are gay and lesbian couples who want 'equal marriage in the church' and are anxiously waiting for GS 2019 in the hopes that they may seal their union in a church ceremony. There are gay and lesbian couples who are already married in civil services who desire to have their marriages blessed by the church.
- There are clergy and lay who hold the view that marriage can only be a lifelong union between a man and a woman – a conviction that is based on their understanding of Scripture and the teaching of the church. They are not homophobic but are struggling with a new teaching about marriage.
- There are many people who are ready to accept that the Anglican Church of Canada has two teachings on marriage, who feel that we have talked about same-sex marriage/blessings long enough, who want a decision to be made, want to focus on other aspects of their life in Christ.
- There are a number of people on both sides of the issue who were unwilling to engage in conversations about the proposed change to the Marriage Canon because they were afraid of being judged by others for their convictions. Some were worried about how their views would affect their friendships, and there are still some clergy who are afraid of disappointing parishioners who hold different views and are concerned about the conscience clause.
- Some people would prefer a non-legislative way of reaching a decision about same-sex marriage to happen at

General Synod.

- Depending on how the vote goes at General Synod in Vancouver I heard that some people will not be able to remain in the Anglican Church of Canada. Some clergy and lay have already left our church. But most people are committed to staying together as members of the body of Christ, convinced that there is more that unites us and holds us together than divides us. Those who build up will always outdo those who seek to break down (Isaiah 49.17a).
- Like every diocese in the Anglican Church of Canada faithfully seeking to know the mind of Christ in the matter of same-sex marriage for our time, I learned that Algoma is not of one mind.

In response to what I heard I want to say that I am grateful for each conversation I've had – both within the diocese and beyond, even though some of them have been very difficult. I have a much greater depth of understanding about the complexity of the issues and they have been formative for me personally. Through these conversations I've learned that 'good disagreement' is possible, especially when the truth was spoken in love, that face to face dialogue builds relationships and trust between people and that John is right when he says that 'there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.' (1 John 5.18) We cannot allow fear of the other to get in the way of how we engage in difficult conversations.

I am also convinced that just as diversity in the natural world makes for a magnificent creation, for Algoma to flourish we need diverse voices on this and many other subjects in the life of our church, so long as those voices are respectful of each other. Honouring diversity and staying at the table together is a far better way of being together than simply tolerating the other or leaving.

I will be paying close attention to conversations and discussions as they unfold this week at Synod as part of my own discernment and I know that the General Synod delegates will be listening too. While many people use

the image of 'family' for the church, I prefer Paul's image of the body (1 Cor. 12) because bodies are stuck together and when one part is missing it affects the whole body. I am committed as your bishop to walking with you in the way of unity, justice, and humility.

On the National Church front I have been encouraged by the 'currency of grace' that members of the House of Bishops have extended to each other in the midst of our differences. The Primate, Bishop Tom and Bishop Michael can attest to the amount of time we have dedicated to this subject, some would say at the expense of other important topics that we should also be discussing. While we are not of one mind on the marriage of same-sex persons we did reach consensus on the recent Statement which I am including as an appendix to this Charge.

At its recent meeting the members of the Council of General Synod (the executive body which meets between regular sessions of General Synod) prepared *The Word to the Church* – a statement with Five Affirmations in it concerning the matter before General Synod, and it passed unanimously. I'm attaching it for your consideration.

I grew up in a home where my mother, Nora, needed, in writing, a promise from my father that they would marry the very same day she arrived in South Africa from England on a boat, and that their children would be raised Roman Catholic. They were married within two hours of the boat docking with only two witnesses and a priest present. Imagine her hurt when her daughter left the Catholic Church at 21 to become an Anglican. She kept loving me anyway. Although she had very strong views about marriage our home was full of her friends – divorcees, single men who showed up with different girlfriends and never married any of them, women whose husbands had left them – she loved them fiercely.

When apartheid was still in full force my mother befriended a black woman and brought her home to meet the family. Mom never marched in a parade or wrote an angry letter, but by her life modeled a way that included

everyone. This is the example of my life. When I say that there is room at Algoma's table for everyone know that it is true – there is room for you here.

In our arguments and discussions about the marriage of same-sex persons, we can assert that this is a doctrinal issue or a theological issue or a matter of scriptural authority and rest our case there. But for many this is deeply personal and so it also becomes a pastoral matter for our consideration. This is why I believe we need "to bend together" and find common ground.

While the General Synod delegates and I are listening well, when we go to Vancouver each will be voting according to his or her own conscience. I also want you to know that regardless of the outcome of the vote at General Synod that I will not be making a decision right away. The issues are complex and many and Algoma has its own context, as does the Diocese of Moosonee where I also serve. I know that the very experience of being at General Synod will need some time for us all to unpack what has happened and then to reflect and pray about it. Any decision made in haste will not serve the church or this diocese well in the long run.

The weight of the decision the bishops of our church are being asked to make is a heavy one, and we are all feeling that burden. So that I am prepared when I make it, by the spring of 2020, I will be involved in regional conversations to hear as many Algoma Anglicans as possible.

What can we do together between now and General Synod? Pray for our beloved church, The Primate, and for all the delegates attending General Synod. And then pray for it in the weeks and months that follow for the church isn't going anywhere and we are here for the long haul. Pray for the nominees for the position of Primate – Bishop Michael Oulton, Bishop Linda Nicholls, Archbishop Ron Cutler, Archbishop Greg Kerr-Wilson, and Bishop Jane Alexander. May our heartfelt prayer for the church in this moment be that in all things we may be directed by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God of promise and hope, who called us and named us as your own, speak to your Church as it prepares for General Synod 2019 in Vancouver. Guide and bless all the members of General Synod, especially our Primate, Fred. We also pray for Anne our Archbishop, Aidan Armstrong, Jakob DeVries, Deborah Kraft, Hugh Mackenzie, and Gilles Tessier, chosen from this Diocese. Grant them wisdom to listen with insight and openness, and generosity to seek and understand a variety of perspectives. Clothe all of us with love and bind us together in perfect harmony, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

8. GRATITUDE FOR CLERGY AND WELL WISHES FOR THOSE MOVING ON

It's time to wrap this up but before I do I want to wish the clergy who are retiring or ending their present ministry in Algoma God's richest blessings in all that awaits you. Thank you for your dedication to our church and for your faithfulness in serving Christ. To Rev. Diane Hilpert-McIlroy, Rev. Pam Rayment, Rev. Rick Reed, the Ven. Dawn Henderson, and the Rev. Chris Davis – go with our blessing in the name of Jesus.

And always, to those closest to me – my beloved family – Colin, Caitlin and Richard, who love me no matter what; to our amazing Synod office staff – Liz, Jane, Jay, Harry and Marjorie; to wise friends who offer counsel in difficult times; to Bishop Tom Corston, Archdeacon Harry Huskins and Archbishop Colin Johnson for all their help in Moosonee and the Province; and to my three Chancellors Garth O'Neill, Bryan Finlay and Jean Bedard – I am eternally grateful.

Faithfully submitted:

The Most Rev. Anne Germond – May 9th, 2019

A FUTURE NOT OUR OWN

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny fraction
of the magnificent enterprise
that is God's work.

Nothing we do is complete,
which is another way of saying
that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No programme
accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives
includes everything.

That is what we are about.

We plant a seed that will one day grow.

We water seeds already planted,
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations
that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects
far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything,
and there is a sense of liberation
in realising that.

This enables us to do something,
and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete,

but it is a beginning,

a step along the way,

an opportunity for the Lord's grace
to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference
between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders,
ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

*This prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in Nov. 1979 for a

celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included in a reflection book a passage titled "The mystery of the Romero Prayer." The mystery is that the words of the prayer are attributed to Oscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him.

APPENDIX 1

Statement from House of Bishops March 2019

We know that the consideration of same-sex marriage has been painful and caused deep concern across our Church. Although we are not of one mind on this matter the House of Bishops, in Christian love, affirms:

1. That Indigenous Peoples will seek God's direction on these matters in their own way and in their own time.
2. That we have two views of marriage that are held by the faithful of the Anglican Church of Canada.
3. That clergy be protected for holding, teaching and, with permission, exercising either view of marriage.
4. That we commit to remain in communion, living together with respect.

In light of these affirmations we invite the Church to join us in prayer for the work of General Synod 2019 that we may bear with one another in unity and love under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

APPENDIX 2

A Word to the Church: Considering the proposed amendment of Marriage Canon XXI

This Word to the Church was passed by consensus by the Council of General Synod on March 16, 2019.

It can be found on the website of the Anglican Church of Canada with the following link:
<https://www.anglican.ca/news/a-word-to-the-church-considering-the-proposed-amendment-of-marriage-canon-xxi/30023889/>

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- [2] Christopher Craig Brittain and Andrew McKinnon. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, Pennsylvania, 2018.
- [3] C.K. Robertson *Transforming Stewardship*. Church Publishing, New York, 2009.