

## The 2017 Synod

The 2017 Synod was a monumental event for me. I am going to give a very personal view of my experience. I should add that I did my best to represent my parish. I would like to thank Elaine and Bill Sipprell who prepared me so that I got the most out of the Synod. Elaine and I discussed the issues right from the beginning and the discussion included others at times so that we were working for the parish and diocese even when we were socializing

Preparation for Synod actually began with the Saugeen Deanery's meeting before the Synod. It was there that Tanya Phibbs explained what was going to be voted on at the Synod. While there, I met priests and parishioners from other parishes.

The Synod began on Sunday at 5:00 p.m. with opening business at The Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, "the capital building of the Huron diocese". During this service, I saw how we at Owen Sound Anglican are part of something bigger than just our local parish. This gave me strength and hope.

The opening business was followed by a barbeque with delicious food. If you needed a special menu such as vegan or gluten free, it was available upon request. At the barbeque, it was time to become reacquainted with old friends like Christopher Pratt. Graham joined us at the barbeque and it was good to socialize and discuss church business in such a pleasant setting.

Monday was the biggest business day. Much of what needed to be voted on and passed and changed had been worked through already. People expressed different concerns about different issues before the voting took place.

In my opinion, there were two main areas of concern throughout the Synod. The first issue was the church closings. The second issue was same-sex marriage. During the voting and visiting while the Synod was happening, everyone's interest peaked at different points.

The first concern was addressed by The Charge to Synod by the Bishop on Monday morning about how the churches that were not viable needed to be closed. Changes and innovations must be made in order for the Anglican Church to survive. Anglicans are decreasing in number by about three percent a year. This is a complex matter. One priest asked, "***What about the people who grew up in those churches and have their ancestors buried there?*** I would ask what is our Christian response to them?"

The second concern of the Synod was addressed on Monday afternoon when we discussed the upcoming **2019** vote on same-sex marriage. We broke into groups of about 25 people, so that our concerns and thoughts would be noted. No one in our group opposed same-sex marriage. In fact, a few people expressed concern that those who opposed same-sex marriage might be afraid to speak up. One priest advised us not to make assumptions about those who opposed same-sex marriage. He said that we should not assume that those who oppose same-sex marriage have not met gay people, or are fundamentalist bigots. He spoke of one woman whose daughter wished to get married to her same-sex partner but her mother opposed the marriage in spite of the emotional turmoil her decision caused her.

On Monday night there was a formal dinner with awards and a speaker. It was at the dinner that I began to understand ***how dynamic the Anglican church is***. There was an award given for environmental work. I spent the Monday night, after the dinner, with Mary Farmer, Elaine, Mona, and Graham discussing the issues that were of concern during the Synod.

Part of Tuesday morning consisted of presentations from the Justice League of Huron, and other groups concerned with social justice, First Nations, and environmental concerns. I have emailed the Rev. Christine Brouillard-Coyle to find out if I can be part of their work. Also, on Tuesday morning, Graham encouraged me to bring a concern of mine to the Bishop's attention. When I first got my information package about the Synod, I noticed that the Huron Diocese's coat-of-arms consisted of two crossed swords, a helmet and a beaver. I thought the helmet and the swords were not appropriate for a Christian organization. Graham suggested at the close of the meeting, when there was a time to raise other concerns that I speak to this matter, which I did. There was a long pause, during which time I thought what I have done, before the Bishop answered. She said that this would be a long process which she would have to investigate. I do not think that anyone else even took note of the coat-of-arms before I pointed it out. I include this to show that everyone can make an impact at Synod.

I learned that the Synod is necessary so that Anglicans come to understand and feel that they are a part of a bigger church. The process is more dynamic than I had realized until I went to the Synod. It is possible to attend all or part of the Synod on a visitor's non-voting pass if you are interested. If you did go as a non-voting visitor, you would learn a great deal about our church and what it is doing.