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The Mustard Seed.

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The Bishop's Charge from the 52nd Synod

By Bishop Rachael Parker

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12.1-2)

I thank each of you who have gathered here this evening, to open our 52nd Gathering of Synod, who have come to this sacred space to share in worship, in prayer, in discernment, in conversation, in decision-making, as we move into the second century of the incarnation of the Church known as the Anglican Diocese of Brandon. Just a year and a half ago, we gathered here to celebrate our 100th anniversary. This weekend we are gathering to seek God's wisdom, the Holy Spirit's guidance, and the direction of Jesus Christ himself, as we carry the Gospel and the work of Jesus out from this place and into the world in which we are called to share it.

At this time, I would like to offer a sincere word of appreciation to Dean Evetts and the Cathedral congregation on behalf of your rear ends! This Charge is not going to be short and before I step out of this pulpit, you will all be grateful that the decision was made to move from hard, wooden, and unforgiving pews to soft, comfy seating! Well done, Cathedral!

I would also like to thank all of you for the grace and patience and willingness you have shared with me over the past 2 and a half years, as I have been learning how to

become your Bishop. As I was preparing for this Synod the gravity of this Charge and the responsibility it holds began to weigh down upon me. It is my pleasure and my privilege to share with you my first, of many, Bishop's Charges with you this night. I would also like to offer my appreciation to the Bishop's Charge Committee who have generously accepted the role of receiving this Charge, reporting on it, and acting as my voice in bringing forward any motions or actions which may be desired from this Call to Revival.

As you may have noticed, our theme for this Synod is “Revival.” For those who don’t know what I mean by “revival” I would like to give you a few hints. (These are hints only, as it will be the Holy Spirit who will lead us into this Revival and will unfold its incarnation as we move together as a Diocese.)

For some, the word revival may suggest reviving something or someone: bringing it back to life, like CPR for a dying man: when we are able, as our Teen Leadership Camp participants learned this summer, to help someone get their heart beating again, and granting them new life. This sort of revival is absolutely what we are called to do in this Diocese. There are some churches, and indeed some greater communities, which need some metaphorical CPR to bring them back to life. For others, Revival might conjure images of the old Tent Revivals where dynamic speakers, fantastic musicians, and altar calls brought people from everywhere to give their lives to Jesus. These are simply two ends of a wide spectrum of Revival. I anticipate that we will find ourselves experiencing both ends of the spectrum in the next few years but we

will also both witness and participate in Revival in many and varied ways as we grow and commit ourselves anew to seeking, serving, and growing in Christ as individuals, as churches, and as a Diocese.

Revival can seem like a daunting challenge for a church of our age, demographic, geography ... However, as we have entered our second century of being Church, we must take a good, long look at who we have become, and where we are going. Our trajectory is not looking good right now. We have been closing churches. We are seeing declining numbers at Sunday services. We have a significant clergy shortage, and we are seeing pockets of lay leadership shortages as well. The Mustard Seed is not getting record numbers of “feel good” stories about new Bible Studies or creative new ways of worshipping or reaching out into our wider communities. In many communities, people aren’t even aware that the Anglican Church is still a vital part of the neighbourhood. As harsh as it is to hear it, the Anglican Church across Canada, and right here in the Diocese of Brandon seems to be more of a Palliative Church than a Church of Revival.

Years ago, when I did my palliative care training, the wisdom of the day was that we were simply making the patient, or the parishioner, comfortable until their time to die arrived. In the intervening thirty years, the wisdom has changed. Palliative *does* indeed mean helping to keep people as comfortable as possible but not with death as the certain outcome. Increasingly, people who have been deemed palliative are simply being given the time to recover and regroup as they participate in new possibilities,

new treatments, a new way of looking at their lives. No longer is “palliative care” seen as a period which inevitably leads to death. It can be seen as a beautiful and new opportunity to regroup, rethink, and prepare for life differently! In fact, it can lead to a time of powerful revival!

Our Diocese, our Parishes and individual Churches are all called to take a good look at where we are, how we feel, and how we are being called to embrace Revival. Whether the first steps in our local churches are to engage in life saving CPR – which could also be known as “Christ Please Revive” – or setting up a tent, inviting dynamic preachers, pray-ers, and musicians and having a good old-fashioned Gospel Jamboree with an altar call to boot, there is not one of our faith communities in the Diocese of Brandon who won’t benefit from a heartfelt invitation to ask Jesus to bring us all to Revival.

Jesus has done the challenging work for us. Ours is to say a resounding, “Yes, Lord” and to follow him with renewed hope, renewed energy, and a renewed commitment to share our love for Jesus, and Jesus’ love for us, with all the world! When every single member of the Diocese of Brandon awakens every morning, and offers their heart and their hands to Christ, Revival will come. It won’t be stopped. Helping the world to see and experience the greatest love known to humanity cannot do anything less than change the world and all the hearts in it. We are called to bring the Life of Christ to every corner of our Diocese ... but that means we must start by bringing it to every corner of our churches and communities first.

The Bishop's Charge Continued

We need to pray for Revival – in our own hearts, in our own churches, in our own deaneries, in our own diocese. And once that has begun to happen, the dreams of priests like Fr Cent from Tri-Valley and Archdeacon Jonathan from Brandon and Souris will be realized. We won't be closing churches anymore. Quite to the contrary, we will be opening churches, welcoming strangers, feeding the hungry, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ in communities we don't even know yet! I genuinely believe that time will come. However, that time can only come when that belief and that passion and that commitment for real honest-to-God Revival is in each of our hearts!

Right now, we may be thinking of ourselves as a Palliative Church but if we commit ourselves to Christ we will recognize God's promise as spoken through Isaiah in Chapter 43.19: "I am about to do a new thing ... I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

So, as I continue this Charge with some more specific calls, I encourage you to gather your comfortable walking shoes and your waterproof boots because God is preparing for us some new paths to walk in the wilderness and some rivers to ford in the desert!

Okay, we have our comfortable and supportive footwear in our hands. We are preparing to walk out in Jesus' name and sow the seeds of Revival in our parts of this Diocese. How do we start?

We begin with prayer. We commit to kneeling before the Lord every single day, committing ourselves, our churches, and our diocese to becoming faithful and prayerful in ways we haven't yet conceived. As part of our Baptismal Promises, we commit ourselves to prayer. I already have an expectation that the clergy will take time to do their "Daily Office" or daily prayers. I would like to challenge each of you, lay and ordained, to commit to the same. Pray for yourselves, your families, your church and

community, your lay leaders and clergy. This does not need to be a long and drawn-out practice but I am asking each of you – and this request is for you to take back to your congregations as well! – to take intentional time every day for the next three years, until our Synod meets again, to pray for Revival, for this Diocese, for the leadership of this Diocese. More importantly, I am calling on you to pray, *with expectation*, for the people around you, that they might come to know Christ, as you also come to know Christ better as well. Prayer is the first step.

The next step in our journey into Revival is a commitment to better Communications. At its heart, prayer is essentially communication between us and God. As we deepen our prayer lives, we will see a change for the better in our ability to communicate with God, both in speaking and listening.

Communications consist of more than simply our relationship with God though. We need to learn new ways to share with one another on the local and diocesan levels. The experts say that we need to see/hear/be informed of something seven times before it sinks in. How true that is! How many times have you heard Charlie Brown's teacher's voice "waah, waah, waahing" at you during announcements on Sunday? How often do you skip over emails or Facebook posts from the Diocese? Have you read The Mustard Seed lately? Each of these are ways that the leadership of the church is trying to share with you information, ideas, prayers, opportunities that are important for you and the life of your church community. The Diocese is asking that you begin prioritising attention to these communications.

If you don't receive The Mustard Seed, let us know and we will get you signed up. You're not following the Diocese of Brandon Facebook page? Request to follow. Ignoring your priest's announcements, just don't. Pay attention and you might just be surprised at how much is actually happening around

you.

Now, that is my request of you. This is a two-way street though. The Diocese of Brandon has not been as on top of clear communications as we should be. Over the next three years between Synods, we will be intentionally seeking out and learning new ways to better communicate with you directly and helping you to communicate with each other as well.

Other dioceses in Canada make excellent use of such things as web-based magazines and blogs which share up to date information – with pictures and graphics – on a monthly and sometimes weekly basis. A diocese I once served in hosted a YouTube video after every Executive Committee meeting in which the Bishop then shared the conversations and decisions made at those meetings. The editor of The Mustard Seed (Canon Rob Parker) has been trying to expand our monthly paper to a minimum eight page spread to make more room for your stories, pictures, advertisements of church happenings, etc. He is always open to new submissions but there are specific parameters. Check out The Mustard Seed display for a take-home on the "how to's" of submitting to the paper.

Part of our work to better our communications efforts will be to establish a monthly email which will include the Diocesan, Canadian, and Anglican Communion Prayer Lists. (This will also be of help when you say your own daily office!) We will commit to developing and maintaining a comprehensive database of emails, addresses, and phone numbers to ensure that we are communicating with as many of you and your fellow parishioners as possible. We recognize that not everyone is able to easily get connected on the computer. For those who just don't "do" the world wide web, we will develop some old-fashioned tools that ensure you also receive information in a timely manner.

To that end, over the next few years, the Diocese will be creating a volunteer position for a Communications

The Mustard Seed

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Jan 2027	Dec 1, 2026
Feb 2027	Jan 2, 2027

Please note: All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, timeliness, appropriateness, or length. Submit writing to the Editor in Microsoft Word file format or in the body of an email. Photographs must be large, high resolution jpg files. Please ensure you have permission from parents or guardians of all minors who have their photos or names published in The Mustard Seed. If including a photo, please send a name of who took the photo along with it, so the Editor can give proper credit!



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Director who will facilitate our databases, Communications Strategies, and will help us all to remain connected as we seek to share with one another how we see our Diocesan Revival unfolding. If you have ideas to share with the Communications Director when that position is up and running, please reach out and let us know. Communications within this Diocese will always need to be multi-directional.

I anticipate that as we improve our communications skills and recognize the power of the prayers upholding them, we will begin to see exponential growth in relationship building and Revival within the Diocese.

In addition to our focus on Prayer and Communications, we cannot invite the Holy Spirit to engage us in true Revival if we don't allow ourselves to first engage in relationship building. The relationships I am referring to are primarily with God and our response to the Call God has upon our hearts. Every single baptized Christian has a vocation given them by Christ himself.

For most Christians, those vocations are lived out in their daily lives and work as parents, spouses, friends. People may also be called to serve Christ as teachers, medical practitioners in their many forms, scientists, plumbers, electricians, mechanics ... and however God has asked you to share your gifts and dreams with the world. By virtue of our baptism, we are expected to seek and serve Christ right where we are, at any given time, doing exactly what we are called to do. Too seldom do we acknowledge that our Christian vocations are much wider than simply discovering how we are called to serve within the traditional Church.

That being said, however, within our Diocese of Brandon, our Revival must also bring us to a place of prayer and discernment in which we are actively asking God to raise up those who are called to serve as both lay leaders in our communities, but also clergy within our Diocese. We will always need well-trained and willing lay people

to participate as Licensed Lay Readers, as well as regular readers of Scripture. leaders of the Prayers of the People, wardens, Sunday School teachers and Bible Study facilitators, treasurers, Synod delegates. But at the heart of who we are as Christians who identify as Anglicans, we need sacramental leaders (priests) to offer their vocations to our local churches and communities, and deacons who do not simply act as "raised up Lay Readers" but who truly do their ministry out in the world and then interpret the world to the Church.

The Diocese of Brandon has had a long and storied history of raising up, training, and deploying people – men and women both – in their own vocational calls. From the women who served for decades as Bishop's Messengers, to the work begun under Bishop Conlin when the Messengers' home became the Henry Budd College for Ministry, helping our Indigenous communities to raise up those who would be ordained as deacons and priests to serve in their own home First Nations, to the incredibly lifegiving and powerful work of recognizing the need for well-trained, and maintained, Lay Readers on every level, who have been prayed for, taught, and sent out by Archdeacon Kara for the past many years. This Diocese has a good track record of reading the signs of the times and moving, with God's help, in lifting people in their vocations as they are recognized and needed.

We have come to a point in our journey as a Diocese at which we need to transition, once again, into a place of discernment for clerical vocations. Archdeacon Kara and Henry Budd College have some powerful and unique resources and opportunities to share for those who are discerning a call to both diaconal and priestly ministry. My concern is not that we don't have the resources to facilitate those discernment needs. Quite to the contrary, my wonder is if we have forgotten the real need we have to be exercising that discernment in our local communities...

Our Diocese is not alone in this question. Across the country the Anglican Church is seeing more churches who have no clergy. Fewer people are seeking admission to seminary for the ordination stream, as the study of theology and religion is becoming increasingly attractive. There are indeed many people who feel a true call to study, research, teach about God and the Church, and indeed, all religions. We just are seeing fewer people who are willing, or able, to seek a vocation of service within the Church.

As Anglicans, and as a Diocese, we are in a peculiar position. We are desperately looking for clergy, or potential clergy members. However, the priesthood and the diaconate are not simply "jobs" that can be filled by anyone who can graduate with a degree or diploma. Ordained orders of ministry take into account not just learning and training but also charisms, ability to be compassionate, a willingness to commit to lifelong discernment, prayer, and a recognition that this is not a "career" but a commitment to giving over every aspect of your life to God and diving in with trust and knowing that not one step will be easy. But trusting that, with God's help, you will be given the resources you need *when you need them*, and seldom before!

While it is the role of the Diocesan Bishop, other leaders – both lay and ordained – who are tasked with participating in discernment of postulants (or those discerning ordination), the first steps must always come from the local congregations. One aspect of your baptismal vocations as members of congregations is to pray, discern, keep an eye out for people around you upon whom God may have placed a call to ordination.

The act of discerning a call to ministry is always two-fold. The person called must hear God speaking to them, feeling the call upon their own hearts. That call must also be felt by the community around them. The tricky part of this is that these two discernments must happen separate from each other, for the most part. A

young person with a call should not be wandering around randomly asking others if they think that they are called. Nor should community members simply tell another that they think they are called. The process of discernment must be symbiotic and ongoing. This means we must be open to seeing and hearing the Holy Spirit working in our midst and within our own hearts and then having the courage to name the Holy Spirit's promptings out loud.

I absolutely believe that God would have a priest and a deacon and lay leaders available to share their ministries with every single community that God has called into being, and *will call into being*, within our Diocese, as we live and work into Revival. I believe that there are people in our churches in whose hearts Jesus has begun to speak and say, "you are my beloved. I am choosing you."

I know that God is not telling the Church in Brandon or across the country that our time is wrapping up. We are not being called to see ourselves as the Anglican Palliative Church of Canada. No indeed. We are being called to embrace the truth that we are called to be the Revived Anglican Church in which vocations to the diaconate and priesthood are being carefully and faithfully discerned. This discernment process is a long one. We need to create a Diocesan pathway and a map with which we can guide those who are discerning, and which will help us all to relax and allow God's timing to unfold. All too often I find myself feeling rushed to "find people for positions" and I know that the Spirit is calling me to a place of trust, gentleness, and patience as we prepare for the next hundred years.

Our Diocese needs to re-develop a plan which will include a Standing Committee which can work with me and the leadership of the Diocese to establish expectations, processes, and interconnectedness with other dioceses and the National Church that we might have an easy to access information base for people who are at the beginning of their discernment

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process, and which will pair them with mentors, guide them through such expectations as education, ACPO (a form of discernment required by the Church), areas in which they need to grow, etc.

Will this take time? Yes, absolutely. Are we in a rush? No. There will obviously need to be wiggle room as we build up these resources. There will be times when necessity and God's generosity speed the process up. There will be other times when the process will be agonizingly slow, as it sometimes needs to be. However, we are called to be the Church of today and all of God's tomorrows, so we will walk with God, at God's pace, as we discover and discern what it is that God is calling us to do, and with whom God is calling us to work.

For the vocational parts of our Revival, the Diocesan leadership will need to hunker down and collate the resources we have, develop our human resources (lay and ordained) as we move forward and walk the path of corporate discernment. Your part in our vocational Revival is quite literally to begin praying and then asking the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to those who may be called to ordained ministry around you. They could be young people in your congregation. They might be people who would serve bi-vocationally as they live out the work they currently do as well as serve in the Church. It might be someone whose life is closer to the end than the beginning but in whom God is placing a call to share their experience, wisdom, and gifts. Your call in this moment is to discern those who might be invited to begin their own discernment as well. Indeed, you yourself may be called to discern too.

Another way that the Spirit is calling us to Revival within the Diocese is in our call to commit to creating Safe places, spaces, and opportunities for those who are feeling drawn to Christ and in whose lives the Church is becoming more important. This Diocese is in the unenviable position of being much too slow in fulfilling the requirements of the National and Provincial Church, and our own due diligence, to create,

implement and maintain a more robust Diocesan Safe Church Plan and Protocols. While we have begun initial steps to bring the Diocese and our existing protocols into compliance, we have much work to do.

Our Call to Safeguarding within the Diocese is not a call to eliminate risk in and through the Church. We are called and must be committed to *mitigating* risk whenever and wherever we can. The Diocese must establish a Standing Safeguarding Committee with appropriate and strong Terms of Reference, with a commitment to regularly communicate and interact with Deaneries, Parishes, and local representatives.

Safeguarding must primarily focus on our vulnerable peoples: children, the disabled, and the elderly. However, it must also wrap itself around the practical day to day lives of our churches from appropriate lighting and trip hazards to financial policies which must include the lived expectation that all monies will be collected, counted, and deposited under joint custody. The Safe Church aspects of our Diocese and individual churches are not exciting ministries, for the most part, but they are the ones that ensure that we are being good stewards of the gifts God shares with us – personnel, financial, and property.

At our next Synod – and at Executive Committee meetings in between – I am asking that we will report on revisions to existing protocols, and the addition of new protocols which will span the life of a church from management to pastoral care to education and everything in between. By Synod 2029 our Diocese must be in full compliance with National and Provincial Church expectations and local common pastoral sense.

I have just spoken about our Diocesan relationship with the greater church with respect to our Safe Church policies. This inter-Anglican relationship must also be prayerfully considered and respected as we grow in faith and embrace the Revival God will be sharing with us. As a geographically

significant diocese, we are one of the smallest in our country by census. We rely considerably on our relationship with the National Church for support, encouragement, professional engagement, administrative support, and not least financially. Each year a considerable part of our budget is given to us as our Council of the North Grant.

Over the past few years, I have noticed that within the Diocese we have pockets of frustration and annoyance with respect to our relationship with the National Church. As the past few years have shown, the Council of the North Grant has been shrinking and there have been grumblings about fairness and accusations that this shouldn't be happening. The reality of our situation – both Diocesan and National – is that costs of doing business have been increasing and revenue and donations have been decreasing. Our Council of the North Grant is dependent upon the Fair Share collected from each diocese by National Church. When dioceses don't send in their full amount of Fair Share, there is less money to grant to the nine Council of the North dioceses.

Our own Diocese has a role to play in that. A few years ago, we did not contribute our Fair Share at all. I believe this was an oversight during the challenging times between episcopal administrations. Your Executive Committee has been working hard to ensure that this will never happen again. We have committed to paying an increasing amount of our apportioned Fair Share each year consecutively until we are contributing 100% of our apportionment. I believe this will be accomplished in 2028.

Our Primate Shane Parker has committed the National Church to work within the current triennium to find ways to exercise best stewardship practices within the National Office, the role of the Primate, and in relationships between National Church, Ecclesiastical Provinces, and Dioceses. To this end, he has commissioned people to chair Pathway Groups which have specific and direct tasks in place to decrease costs, increase communications, and better facilitate decision

making across the Anglican Church of Canada. These 6 Pathways have been shared in depth in several editions of The Mustard Seed. If you would like more information about any of the specific Pathways, I encourage you to go to the website for the Anglican Church of Canada.

Two Pathways in particular – #5 and #6 which are regarding the Self-determination of the Indigenous Anglican Church and the Council of the North respectively – have particular implications for our Diocese. Pathway 5 is working with ACIP or the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples and they have not yet produced a straightforward way with which we might better understand where Sacred Circle and ACIP are heading. The work of Pathway 5 is, of course, incredibly important for our Diocese as it has potential for significant and wide-ranging impacts on at least half of the Diocese of Brandon. As information is made available, I will ensure that you are all made aware of decisions, implications, and potential changes.

Pathway 6 is the purview of the Council of the North. As Chair of the Council of the North, I am also Chair of Pathway 6. Our tasks as a Pathways group are to hone and keep updated the purpose and Handbook for the Council; to create and maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council of General Synod that the Council of the North will be maintained as a contributing and advising body to the National Church; and finally, the biggest challenge of all, that each diocese of the Council will work to become financially self-sustaining. ...

Yes, you did hear me correctly. We are being asked, and the Council of the North is beginning to do the foundational research and stewardship work of moving toward each diocese becoming financially viable without assistance from National Church. The writing is on the wall. A day will come, sooner than we might hope, when the National Church will no longer be able to sustain financial support of the nine Council of the North dioceses. This may seem like a death knell for these nine

The Bishop's Charge Conclusion

dioceses. However, I do believe that God is calling each of our dioceses, including Brandon, to see this as an invitation to place our trust in the Lord, to begin considering what local diocesan stewardship looks like, and recognizing that God will not see us without the tools we need if the tools we use are truly sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. The first tool God is calling us to use is that of Revival – placing our hope in the One who will “make a new way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert,” and then going out into the world proclaiming the sure and certain foundation of our hope – Jesus Christ our Lord.

As I noted just a few moments ago, the Diocese of Brandon will be called, at some point, to engage with Sacred Circle and ACIP as we participate in the new ways God is calling the Anglican Church and our Indigenous Anglican siblings to walk in a Good Way. This will require a recommitted effort by both Indigenous members of our Diocese and our Diocesan leadership to revive DCAAf – Diocesan Council for Aboriginal Affairs – and prepare one another to engage in what may come. With respect to Sacred Circle and ACIP, DCAAf will have the ability and the responsibility to determine how and in what ways it will engage with National Church decisions and the implications to come. This will require wide participation and engagement from our Indigenous siblings. The Diocese of Brandon cannot and will not dictate how this work will be done but we will expect that relationship building and ongoing work will indeed happen as we grow in relationship within the Diocese, so that we can be mutually supportive when extra-Diocesan implications come into play.

Across the country, many other dioceses with considerable Indigenous communities have been seeing a rise in church attendance and a greater interest in the interplay of Anglican expressions of Christianity and Traditional teachings, including traditional languages. I am pledging the support of the Diocese of Brandon to every corner of our Diocese, that we will be responsive to your needs

and walk with our Indigenous communities to find ways to encourage all communities of Faith as you see Revival in these communities as well. We are your siblings in Creation, and it is a privilege to come alongside your communities to share in Jesus’ love and commitment for peoples of all ages – from children to elders – as we welcome new expressions of faith being lived.

As we prepare ourselves to be personally revived alongside our Diocesan spiritual Revival, it is of particular importance that we stand firm and resolved in the need to face the world around us and acknowledge that we are long past the time for hard conversations, deep spiritual study, and a clear desire to seek God’s will for all of God’s children from birth to death.

Our Diocese has not yet taken opportunity to sit together in prayer and study and to allow ourselves the gift of conversations that will not be completely harmonious with respect to two considerable and not clear cut concerns which face the western Church: the opportunity for liturgical acceptance of sacramental relationships between individuals of the same gender, and how do we, as a Diocese, respond to the need to offer pastoral care and concern for people during end of life decisions and their families after death.

There are two Motions coming to the floor of this Synod with respect to 2Spirit LGBTQIA relationships and MAiD – Medical Assistance in Dying. Both Motions instruct me to essentially make a decision and provide instruction. While, in an episcopal church, I have the right and the ability to do just that, I am of the belief that before a decision is made and instruction given, I need to confer with the Church. These two Motions deal with Scriptural interpretations, pastoral considerations, personal and corporate implications, and the need to invite the Holy Spirit into our midst that we might faithfully listen to God, our own hearts, and consciences, and as importantly, one another. My request to you is that a consideration be held to amending these Motions to include study, prayer, and conversations on, at minimum

a Deanery level, but hopefully on a Church and Parish level as well.

Our call to Revival is one which asks that we invite the Holy Spirit to light us afire with a passion for Jesus and also that we might have fire lit within us for a passion to truly look upon our neighbours – in church and outside it – that we might begin to see them as Jesus sees them and discern how best we are called to serve Christ in them.

Our call to pastoral care and loving our neighbours as Christ himself cannot begin with a proclamation from the Bishop. It must begin in our own hearts and then spread among us until we can do no less than love and serve them, with intention, as we would love and serve Jesus himself, with intention.

As we gather here this evening, this weekend, we have been given the incredible responsibility of listening on behalf of the Church and then, in turn, speaking on behalf of the Church as well. As delegates – lay and ordained – you will be asked to pray, consider, discuss, and decide, powerful and impactful changes and directions for Christ’s Church as incarnated in the Anglican Diocese of Brandon. This is not inconsequential work. This is not easy work. It is certainly not work that can be hastened or tabled or just handed on to someone else.

In many ways, each of us gathered here for this Eucharist and for this Synod are the disciples who stood at the ascension, looked around to one another, and came to the realization that they were indeed the ones in whom Jesus had just placed his whole trust. They must have felt overwhelmed. A bit lost. Probably confused. But they also knew that Jesus himself had chosen them to continue in the relationships he had been building between them, and to go out into the world to build the relationships others would then have with Jesus because of the work they were preparing to do.

When we look back on that time, what do we see? Within days, months, and years Jesus-followers were born. The disciples were given the tools, the language, the will, and the ability to go out and light a fire

of faith as they spoke about and lived their faith in Jesus. We are here two thousand years later because a bunch of rag-tag men and women who probably thought the task was too overwhelming simply believed and acted on what Jesus commanded them to do. Those disciples participated in the very first Christian Revival and the whole world was changed! Now it is our turn, right here at home. Jesus is calling us to do the impossible ... but that is the whole point of faith. If Jesus calls us to do what we don’t yet know how to do, we just say “yes,” slip on our walking shoes, and then start walking in his steps. We don’t need to bring the Revival to our world. Jesus will bring the Revival to us! And then we will truly discover that the wilderness doesn’t look so wide and the desert isn’t nearly as dry as we anticipated!

Our Diocese of Brandon is beloved in God’s eyes, and we are being invited to be leaders in hope, in love, in proclamation, in leading. Together each and everyone of us, each and every one of our churches and communities, each and every community in which we haven’t yet met our soon-to-be siblings in Christ, will experience and celebrate what it is to be given new life in Christ and we will show the world what true Revival can mean! We just must believe and then walk out in that belief.

Are you ready to walk with me? ...

Let us pray ...

Heavenly Father, enter the hearts and minds of your people in our Diocese, that we might feel your call to live the life Jesus calls us to live; that we might be changed and desire to serve him alone. Open our mouths that we will speak his love. Open our hands that we will share his compassion. Guide our feet that we might walk in his ways. And most of all, open our hearts that we might be Revived and renewed to serve You completely. Send Your Holy Spirit into our communities that we might see and experience your miraculous presence and call. In Jesus’ name we pray with expectation. Amen



The Bishop's Charge Conclusion



Full coverage of
Synod

Coming in the
November Edition

Of the Mustard Seed!

The Bishop's Message



Thanksgivings Come From Saying “Yes”

Three years ago this coming Thanksgiving Day, I finished

composing my essays for the Candidate for Bishop package for the upcoming election for your new Bishop. Just as the doorbell rang, our friends coming over for a scrumptious Thanksgiving meal which Rob had prepared all on his own, I hit send on my computer. Ready or not, that keystroke was the final decision I made that would change my life for ever, and for the better. Six weeks later, Rob and I joined you for your Synods and you welcomed us as members of the Diocese of Brandon Family!

I often think about that moment when I knew I couldn’t turn back. It was daunting. Terrifying even.

However, in that push of a button I realized that, whatever might happen, I would always give Thanks to God. Whatever the outcome would be, I had taken a chance. Trusting that God would be guiding me in whatever might happen, I realized that every moment in which we say “yes” to God are the seeds of thanksgiving for what is to come. Obviously I am quite content with the decision made by all of you but which started with a depressed “Send” button, but I have come to understand that regardless of the outcome, saying “yes” to God is always a moment of grace in which we meet God in trust, hope, and faith. Say-

ing “yes” is a moment that should always be a call to give thanks.

Just a few weeks ago we gathered to celebrate our 52nd Synod. That gathering was indeed filled with moments of grace and thanksgiving. We made some obvious decisions and we were challenged to step out in faith, saying “yes” to God. As we prepare to celebrate our own Parish and Family Thanksgiving celebrations, take some time to reflect on all the “yes-es” you have given to God. My hunch is that they will be too many to count.

May God bless you all as you give thanks this Thanksgiving Day!

THANKSGIVING BLESSING

MAY YOUR HEART BE FILLED WITH GRATITUDE, YOUR HOME OVERFLOW WITH PEACE, AND YOUR LIFE SURROUNDED BY GOD’S UNFAILING GOODNESS. AS WE GATHER AND GIVE THANKS, MAY WE BE REMINDED THAT EVERY GOOD GIFT COME FROM ABOVE. MAY THE JOY OF THE FATHER LIGHTEN YOUR SPIRIT, THE LOVE OF HIS SON, JESUS, WARM YOUR TABLE, AND THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE THE GREATEST BLESSING OF ALL. HAPPY THANKSGIVING! AMEN.

ST. JOHN'S BETHANY, MANITOBA

On September 6th, the congregation of St. John's Bethany and St. Mark's Minnedosa, joined together with the community of Bethany and Bishop Rachael to hold a service of deconsecration.

The service was solemn and dignified even though the skies darkened and the thunder rolled; it did not dampen the heartfelt hymn singing. Following the celebration of the Eucharist, Bishop Rachael proceeded to deconsecration the items within the church.

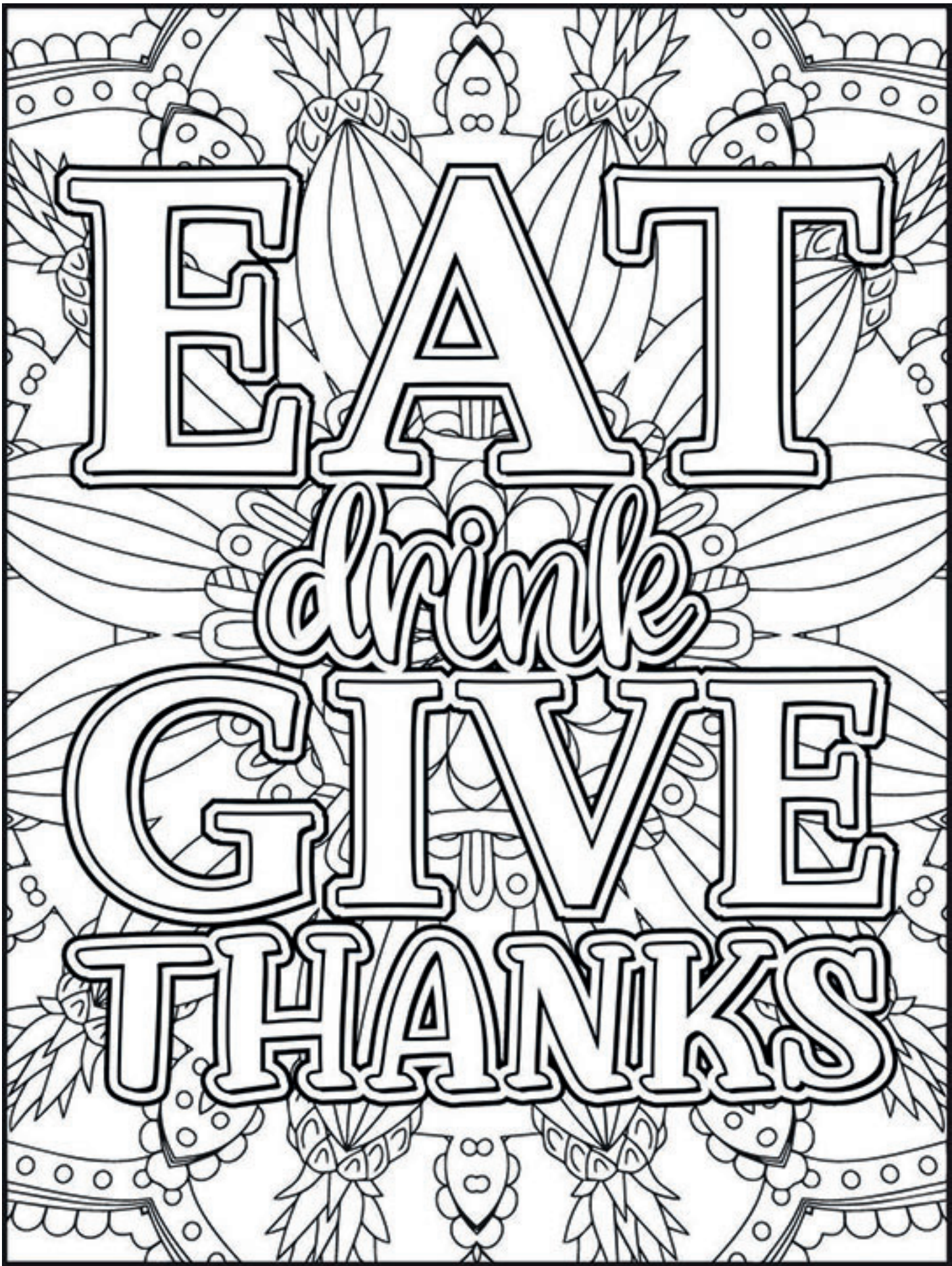
After the service, everyone enjoyed assorted tasty treats. The building will not be sitting empty as a Lutheran congregation that has been worshipping in the church for some time will be taking it over and continuing the worshipping tradition.



"Small cheer and great welcome
makes a merry feast."

William Shakespeare

The Kid's Corner



Giving Thanks!!



St. Paul’s in Dauphin and the entire Brandon family are thanking God and are very grateful that Reverend Barry successfully came through his heart surgery.

We continue to pray for his on-going healing and recovery and for our sisters and brothers in Dauphin as they look after Fr Barry.

"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever." Psalm 107:1