

## **Response to Bishop David Edwards' Charge**

137<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Synod

November 2, 2019

Journey Wesleyan Church, Fredericton, NB

Bishop, head table members, reverend clergy, synod delegates, invited guests, sessional committees and observers.

My name is Richard Walsh, a lay delegate from the Parish of Chatham, and I am honored to have been asked to respond to Bishop David's charge. We are indeed very fortunate and blessed to have Bishop David as our Diocesan shepherd. Almighty God has truly given us a leader with a multitude of talents that he has put to good use since being elected in 2014.

Bishop David, you spoke in your charge about two wonderful major projects taking place within our diocese. These are just two examples of our church in action and these parishes are to be commended for their efforts. I am convinced that there are many more to come as we move forward with the guidance and direction of our Lord's teaching and the Holy Spirit.

Mission has always been an extremely important focus of your ministry, and the two examples of practical mission with Michael Frost and Canon Phil Potter have led you to respond to this idea through your call for every Parish to devise a Mission Action Plan. This call should not be something to fear but to embrace. Too often we worry about developing a complex plan but this should not be the case. Simplicity and action focused on just one idea is all that is required, and in your words "is taking a step beyond where we are now".

The second initiative you spoke about is intentional discipleship. In its simplest meaning I think of us always asking ourselves the question "What would Jesus do?" as you say "when responding to the situations in which we find ourselves". In my personal life I have always asked myself this question before taking an appropriate action that may not always be comfortable to do. However, this decision comes always through a focus on Jesus' teaching and prayer.

Like you, I attended General Synod in Vancouver and there were many wonderful things happen, not the least of which was the election of our new Primate, the Most Rev'd Linda Nicholls, and the Most Rev'd Mark MacDonald being made an Archbishop. However, Canon XXI, and the extensive discussion, unrest and anxiety that surrounded it, was most exhausting, spiritually challenging and controversial. However, we must not allow the negativity and sensationalism of the media to overshadow the wonderful work the Anglican Church of Canada has been doing to bring about Christian unity, as well as its involvement in many other world-wide initiatives.

The "statement to the Church" that was agreed upon by the overwhelming majority of Bishops, including yourself did bring about "the uncomfortable situation of having a separation of doctrine and practice" and has been as you say "the most fractious and fracturing in our life together". And how it is time to heal!

It is my hope and prayer that this Synod, and all Anglicans within this Diocese, will embrace your proposed plan for the "cure of souls" outlined in your charge. And as you say, "Let us go out from this Synod determined to share in the mission of God for the good of all."

Bishop David, thank you for being our good shepherd. Thank you for guiding us through these difficult times. Thank you for sharing your wisdom and for your ability to share God's word and teaching in such a comprehensive and inspiring manner. Thank you for reminding us always to be true to the Holy Word of Almighty God.

God bless you abundantly Bishop David!