

Anglican Diocese of Barbados' Synod 2023

Communiqué

The Annual Session of the Barbados Diocesan Synod commenced on May 28, 2023, the Feast of Pentecost with a celebration of the Holy Eucharist at the Cathedral Church of St. Michael and All Angels during which the Bishop delivered the Charge to the Synod.

In his 5th Charge since Consecration, the Bishop re-emphasised his vision for the Church to guide the deliberations of the Synod. Speaking to the faithful and Synod representatives from all of the Churches across the Diocese, Bishop Michael, in an impassioned plea, summoned all Anglicans to urgent action. He underscored that the time was now for deep introspection followed by action after the most severe effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, with the goal of **“Building Back Better God’s Church for God’s Mission”**, the theme for this year’s Synod. In the Charge, he expanded on the theme and noted that the concept of “building back better” speaks to that notion of resetting; but not resetting to the way things used to be (before the crisis), but rather that of learning from the crisis and seeking to propel the Church to an improved and more energised, focussed and resilient state of being. He charged his flock not to be naysayers but to be doers for the reenergising of the Church - God’s global enterprise.

The business meetings, under the Chairmanship of the Right Rev. Michael Maxwell, Bishop of Barbados, were held on Tuesday, May 30th and Wednesday, May 31st at the Ivan Harewood Centre, Christ Church. These sessions commenced with devotions on the first day and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the second day in observance of the Feast of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth.

On the Tuesday, the Synod approved a Code of Conduct for the Clergy and Church Personnel of the Diocese of Barbados. This Code sets out certain standards by which its Clergy and Church Personnel are to operate and is in line with the current practice in the Anglican Communion. It underscores and seeks to maintain values such as integrity, collegiality and confidentiality amongst the Clergy and other Church Personnel; and also places some emphasis on their health and wellness. In addition, the Code enhances the complaints processes so that congregants have safe outlets should there be unfortunate incidents of impropriety. It also makes provision for prescribed continuing education and performance management for its Clergy and the efficacious use of social media platforms in spreading the gospel of Christ.

One of the most transformational initiatives for the Diocese in recent times was passed by a Motion at the Synod, that of the introduction of Non-Stipendiary Vocational Deacons to the ministry in our Diocese which the Synod approved during its second day of business. This is a pivotal ministry created to support the evangelism and community outreach thrusts of the Diocese’s Mission Action Plan 2022-24 (MAP) and will involve persons who are trained in Theology and Counselling to serve as Non-Stipendiary Vocational Deacons.

Another important initiative for the Diocese relates to the work of the Barbados Diocesan Trustees who have made significant strides in commencing the work on developing photovoltaic sites at two churches with further expansion expected in the next year. Of note too is that the Trustees have been in conversation with the Government to make available some land for lease to assist with its farming initiatives. The Trustees are also in the process of offering tenanted lots for sale in various Glebes at very affordable prices.

As the Diocese looks forward to celebrate its Bicentennial under the theme **“Celebrating 200 Years of the Mission and Ministry of the Anglican Diocese of Barbados,”** the Planning Committee shared with the Synod that something great will be happening from next year July 2024 to July 2025. The celebrations will include Diocesan services to commence and climax the year, Fellowship Day and Concert, Exhibition and Cocktail Reception, Anniversary Dinner, Lectures and Youth activities (including Sports, A Quiz and Song Competition). There will also be an Anniversary Logo Competition. Deaneries, Parishes, Congregations and Organizations will also be invited to plan activities to observe this anniversary at their local level.

In keeping with the theme for the Synod, the Rev. Dr. Adrian Smith of the Calvary Moravian Church was invited to address the Synod on Wednesday afternoon and made a charismatic and interactive presentation under the theme: ***Our Mission is to Build God's Church***. He noted that the Church is already 15 to 20 years behind the current technology and is seeking to rebuild after the devastation of a pandemic which has paralysed it to its very core. He also noted that while other sectors rebounded quickly from the pandemic the Church has not shared the same fortune. He stressed that clergy and church leaders must be mindful of their purpose in this rebuilding phase and the mission must be connecting people to Christ, Community and their Calling. He added that people were the church's greatest resource and must be honoured for their value and worth. He contended that communication is a key element of the rebuilding process and should be done with Conviction, Passion and Credibility. Dr Smith urged Synod to stay the course, expect pressure when implementing change, persevere in its rebuilding efforts and not overlook the importance of partnerships.

Following Dr Smith's presentation, the Synod was divided into clusters and discussed ten areas of focus within the Mission Action Plan (MAP). Those areas were Youth Development, Christian Formation, Evangelism, Family Life, Liturgy and Worship, Advocacy and Social Responsibility, Health and Wellness, Digital Communication, Funding and Capital Resources and Human Resource Development. Some important takeaways shared with the Synod included:

- (a) The Sunday School in the Diocese needs some attention and innovative plans so that each parish can have a thriving Sunday School. Also the need to provide opportunities for teaching life and social skills to our youth to produce mature and enthusiastic Christians and wholesome citizens.
- (b) A renewed emphasis on the Church's teachings which will lead to knowing more about our Anglican Church particularly its practices and beliefs, as well as sound knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures.
- (c) Reviving the Church Army and general church membership to engage in traditional and modern ways of sharing the gospel.
- (d) Family Life programmes to reach and touch each family particularly the vulnerable and at-risk youth.
- (e) Making our worship touch the hearts of all through our very loved and excellent traditional forms at present but also allow for variety such as dance, instruments and modern hymns and spiritual songs.
- (f) Embrace and value online worship and worshippers and the means used.
- (g) Health and Wellness programs and information across the parishes through ministries such as the Health Guilds.
- (h) An approach to making our Anglican Church financially stronger to do greater work for God with each Anglican committing to using his or her God given gifts and skills for God's Mission in service to God's Church for God's Kingdom.
- (i) Playing a greater part in the caring for God's Creation.
- (j) Respond to human need of any kind and embracing methods to help ex-offenders to have a valuable life.
- (k) Spiritual care of prisoners, at-risk youth whether home or school and those under negative influence.
- (l) Need to introduce continuing education programmes for clergy and laity.

Clusters committed themselves to continue meeting; and further information, with actual plans, will be made known to each Church during the summer months.

We invite all God's people to continue to pray for the Church in the Diocese of Barbados.

+Michael Barbados