

THE CHURCH IN THE PROVINCE OF THE WEST INDIES

The Forty-First Triennial Meeting of the Provincial Synod
Church in the Province of the West Indies

THE COMMUNIQUÉ

We, the members of the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity of the Church in the Province of the West Indies at the Forty-First Triennial Meeting, duly convened in hybrid form, in person and virtually, hosted by the Diocese of the Windward Islands at the Anglican Pastoral Centre, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines from the 12th to the 17th November, 2022, DO HEREBY GREET you in the name of our Risen and Ascended Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Synod convened under the theme:

“CPWI SURVIVING COVID-19 AND BEYOND
#LivingourBaptismalCovenant:#BeingaChurchofHope”.

At the opening session held on Saturday, November 12th, 2022 the Right Rev’d, C. Leopold Friday, Bishop of the Windward Islands, welcomed the delegates to Synod and to the Diocese of the Windward Islands. Bishop Friday also introduced the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. The Hon. Ralph Gonsalves and invited him to address the delegates. In his address, Prime Minister Gonsalves spoke about the relationship and intersection of spirituality and politics.

Dr. Gonsalves noted that his nation and the world has faced a challenging 2.5 years with the pandemic, socio-economic turmoil due to the war in Europe, natural disasters and the impact of climate change. These challenges call for reflection on the fundamental principles of faith and how they are made manifest in the contemporary Caribbean.

With reference to an article by Archbishop Gregory, he spoke about the problems associated with individualism which were evident during the height of the pandemic, as persons refused to take the vaccines when these became available, rather than acting out of love, and seeking the greater good.

According to Dr. Gonsalves, the Christian community now has the serious responsibility of reimagining the manifestation and practice of the Christian faith made perfect in works amidst all the contemporary and historical challenges.

Thereafter, the three Houses of Synod, the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity met separately to review the pre-synod journal and other documentation.

On Sunday, 13th November, 2022 the Opening Synod Eucharist was held and the Most Rev. Dr. Howard Gregory, Archbishop of the West Indies, presided as chief Celebrant and delivered his Charge at St. George's Cathedral, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In his sermon the Archbishop focused on the theme for the Synod. He presented the experience of the two disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus as a lens through which we may interpret our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lives of the two disciples have been severely disrupted by the crucifixion of Jesus in whom they had placed their hope as God's messiah who would usher in a new regime of hope and prosperity for Israel. These disciples are truly "companions in disappointment and dashed hopes" as they are joined by the unexpected and unrecognised risen Jesus who accompanies them, explaining and interpreting scripture and revealing himself to them at "the breaking of bread".

The risen Christ has restored hope and these disciples returned to Jerusalem to share in the victory of the risen Lord with their colleagues, the community of believers in Jerusalem.

We in the Church in the Province of the West Indies, along with persons across the globe, have experienced a disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the two disciples, "we can be blind to the presence of activity of God in our midst and therefore fail to realise that God is not absent from our COVID-19 world and that he may be speaking to the world and the church through this pandemic."

The Archbishop concluded this segment "Our Lord engages his church through his ongoing converting, changing and renewing activity, and that may be precisely part of what God is doing at this time of COVID-19 to the world and to his church, if like the men on the Emmaus road we will allow the divine presence and voice a place in our world and our lives in this time of pandemic." It therefore follows that "our vision for life beyond COVID-19 cannot simply be about initiatives and strategies which are designed to improve the state of the economy and going back to the pre-COVID-19 definition of normality as important as that may be."

The Archbishop continued by addressing the implications of our baptismal covenant. He reminded CPWI that our baptismal covenant "is the solemn promise, or sacred agreement, in which God, the principal actor, adopts human persons as his children and makes them members of Christ's Body the church, and inheritors of the Kingdom of God."

He further emphasized, “Our baptismal covenant is initiated in baptism and is re-affirmed in Confirmation, and which we are called to constantly renew, and which then becomes the basis of the energizing force in our life as individuals and as a community of faith.”

Our participation in the baptismal covenant mandates that we respond in the following ways:

1. To follow Christ and to live lives that are grounded in regular sacramental worship.
2. To honour our humanity, acknowledge our sinful nature, and always return to God for forgiveness.
3. To share the Good News with others, of what God has done and continues to do in our lives.
4. To seek to see Christ in all persons and to serve all persons as we would serve Christ himself.
5. To work for justice, reconciliation, and the creation of peaceful communities in which all persons are treated with dignity and respect.

In the final segment, the Archbishop drew attention to the nature of Christian hope that is rooted and grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Christian Church, “cannot be other than the community of hope in a troubled and bewildered world.”

The Archbishop concluded with a strong and relevant challenge to CPWI; “May we come to know and experience the resounding sense of hope and transformation of which our baptismal incorporation into Christ speaks, and, like the men of Emmaus, become living witnesses to the resurrection faith, the ultimate expression of hope and possibility to the church and to a world and nations so disposed to hopelessness and despair in confronting the coronavirus pandemic.

The business sessions of Synod were held from Monday, November 14th, through Thursday, November 17th, 2022; the Most Rev. Dr. Howard K.A. Gregory presiding. On Monday, November 14th, 2022, His Grace the Archbishop commenced with a warm Caribbean welcome address to the bishops, delegates and all observers. He congratulated the Right Rev. Ernest Flemming, Bishop of the Diocese of the North Eastern Caribbean and Aruba, the Right Rev. Garth Minott, Bishop Suffragan of Kingston, Diocese of Jamaica and The Cayman Islands, and the Right Rev. Alfred David, Bishop Suffragan of Kamarang, Diocese of Guyana, who were attending Synod for the first time as members of the House of Bishops.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Carla Barnett, Secretary General of CARICOM. She spoke about the global economic and environmental human challenges facing the Caribbean as a direct result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and other natural disasters. Dr. Barnett recognized the negative and positive impacts of the pandemic on the region, and the continuing need for greater investment in technological infrastructure, capacity building, and the legal and regulatory framework to guide this new media.

As we build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, an “all of society involvement’ is required. The church, which is one of the most influential stakeholders in society must take up the mantle to energize, educate and encourage its members to get involved so that we can achieve, the stable, prosperous and viable Caribbean Community that we want.

Synod was pleased and delighted to receive a greeting from the Worldwide President of the Mothers’ Union, Mrs. Sheran Harper, a native of the Diocese of Guyana. She is the first non-UK holder of the office of President of the Mothers’ Union.

Greetings were conveyed on behalf of the Mothers’ Union Worldwide Board of Trustees and staff at Mary Sumner House.

In her address, Mrs. Harper focused on the need for transformation. This was the focus of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference, and of the global Mothers’ Union. She indicated that there is a great need for transformation in a changing world, a world torn apart by conflict, and other challenges. Our Province continues to face the impact of climate change, health and economic issues, poverty and injustice.

According to Mrs. Harper, The Mothers’ Union is busy trying to impact the lives of individuals and families through our literacy, afterschool, school feeding, parenting, sensitizing about domestic abuse, care of the elderly, care of the environment and ministry to persons in prison. These programmes encourage, new birth, roots, shoots and fruits for all seasons in our beloved Province

In conclusion, she called on the Mothers’ Union in our Province to put aside differences and unite to reach everyone and to attract new members, to meet the needs of our changing world.

Synod also received greetings from the newly appointed Secretary General of the Anglican Consultative Council, the Right Rev. Anthony Poggo and the Rev. Glenda McQueen, Partnership Officer of the Episcopal Church, USA for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Synod received from the House of Bishops, two presentations, one on Baptism as the gateway to Communion and a Statement on Confirmation. After an extensive debate Synod passed the following resolution as amended:

Resolution 1.

TRANSITION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the 40th Triennial Session of Provincial Synod concurred with the decision of the House of Bishops to make Baptism the gateway to Communion provided that change in the present practice will only occur after a transition resolution by the House of Bishops and subsequently passed by the Provincial Synod;

AND WHEREAS the House of Bishops, after reviewing the extensive material produced at Provincial level and locally at diocesan level, in support of the transition from Confirmation as the gateway to Communion to Baptism as the Gateway to Communion, agreed to the extension of the period for study and review of this material at parish level across the Province;

AND WHEREAS the House of Bishops determined that this extended period of study and review end on the last day after Pentecost being the 26th day of November, 2023;

AND WHEREAS the House of Bishops further agreed that the transition from Confirmation as the Gateway to Communion to Baptism as the Gateway to Communion take effect on Advent Sunday being the 3rd day of December, 2023;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Forty-First Session of Provincial Synod of the Church in the Province of the West Indies concur with the decision of the House of Bishops to extend the period of study and review that ends on the last Sunday of Pentecost being the 26th day of November 2023, and urge all Anglicans across the Province to seriously and diligently use this opportunity for further reflection at parish level on the reasons in support of the transition from Confirmation to Baptism as the Gateway to Communion;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Forty-First Session of Provincial Synod CPWI concur with the decision of the House of Bishops authorizing the transition from Confirmation to Baptism as the Gateway to Communion to take effect on the first Sunday of Advent being the third day of December 2023.

The following statement on confirmation was also tabled for circulation throughout the Province.

STATEMENT OF CONFIRMATION

“Confirmation is the rite in which persons willingly express a mature commitment to Christ, publicly renewing the vows and promises made at their baptism and receive further strength by the indwelling Holy Spirit, accompanied by prayer and the laying on of hands by a Bishop.

It is required of those to be confirmed that they are baptized, sufficiently instructed in the Christian Faith, penitent for their sins, and are ready to publicly affirm their confession of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; and strengthened by His indwelling Spirit, are determined to grow in every aspect of their lives in accordance with God's Will.”

(Adaptations of paragraph 125 and 126 of The Catechism page 412)

The Right Rev. Garth Minott made a presentation based on the recently concluded Lambeth Conference.

With the theme of "God's Church for God's World: walking, listening, and witnessing together," the 15th Lambeth Conference was held at Kent University, Canterbury, England. The customary retreats of Bishops and spouses, Bible study led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, based on the book of 1 Peter, and consensus on the Calls or Specific Requests, constituted the content of the Conference.

Along with the opening and closing services, the discussions on the Calls were the highlight of the conference and though there were concerns with the Call on Human Dignity which was presented by Archbishop Howard Gregory, especially in relation to human sexuality, there was general consensus on the Calls with the proviso that revisions are still to be added. In the end the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other Bishops committed to follow up in their respective Provinces, especially with the Communion Forest launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Synod also received reports from five clusters, each commenting on the proposed amendments to the Provincial Action Plan 2019 with particular reference to the following themes:

1. The church's role in developing models for Christian Discipleship
2. Discipleship within the family and Equipping our Youth for Discipleship
3. Discipleship in an era of Environmental and Moral Indifference
4. Discipleship within the multi-cultural society
5. To Disciple in a Digital Age

Each cluster was also requested to comment on the following proposals:

1. A Vision Statement
2. A revised Mission Statement
3. Suggested Core Values – justice, indigenization, integrity, love, and peace.

The recommendations arising out of these discussions were referred to Provincial Standing Committee for further consideration and the production of a Strategic Plan of Action for 2022-2025. A team of persons would also be appointed to assist the Standing Commissions with implementation of the plan.

The following resolutions were tabled and duly passed.

Resolution 2

BE IT RESOLVED that the Dioceses of the Province take steps to commemorate the anniversary of the establishment of these two (2) Dioceses, Jamaica and Barbados, and the formal beginning of an episcopate in the West Indies taking into account the fact that the current dioceses of the CPWI were created from these original dioceses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that anniversary activities planned in each Diocese be brought to the attention of the Provincial Standing Committee so that individual dioceses can be informed of the anniversary and plan their commemorative activities within the framework of a Provincial Celebration.

Resolution 3

BE IT RESOLVED that this 41st session of Provincial Synod mandates the Commission on the Constitution and Canons to consider and propose an amendment to the Constitution and Canons of the Church in the Province of the West Indies for a representative of the Provincial Standing Commission on Youth, other than the Chairman, to be appointed as a member of the Provincial Synod.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that until such an amendment is made to the Constitution and Canons, that the Provincial Standing Committee be mandated to invite a member of the Provincial Youth Commission, other than its Chairman, to attend and participate in discussions and deliberations at the next Provincial Synod of the Church in the Province of the West Indies.

Resolution 4

BE IT RESOLVED that Codrington College be designated as the centre for the Christ-centred mission school.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the faculty of Codrington College be requested to develop a curriculum for the Christ-centered mission programme intended to be the standard to be used within the Province.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each diocese be permitted to adapt the programme according to the specific situation and needs of their congregations and communities.

Resolution 5

BE IT RESOLVED that this 41st Triennial Synod of the Church in the Province of the West Indies do call upon the Province, the constituent Dioceses of the Church in the Province, and their respective organizations and congregations to take steps to implement such measures, policies or regulations as may be necessary or required by law, or otherwise, to safeguard the personal information and data of individuals or third parties.

Resolution 6

BE IT RESOLVED that the Church in the Province of the West Indies adopt, contextualize and implement the Charter for the Safety of People within the Churches of the Anglican Communion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Standing Committee of the Province be empowered to establish a framework for a Safe Church Commission or Council within the Province to give guidance, provide resources and support to Dioceses with respect to the Charter and safe church policies.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the constituent Dioceses of the Province create and implement a Safe Church policy which will include the training of clergy and church workers, and which will provide a mechanism for reporting, investigating and addressing violations of the Charter or safe church policies.

Resolution 7

BE IT RESOLVED that this 41st Triennial Session of Provincial Synod mandates the Provincial Standing Commission on Social Justice and Human Rights to:

- a) Revive and keep under constant and focused review all matters relating to Social Justice and Human Rights in the constituent Dioceses of the Province and make recommendations to the Provincial Standing Committee and the Provincial Synod on the development of strategies which will assist the Church in furthering its work on these matters.
- b) Assist with the establishment and/or empowerment of a Human Rights and Social Justice Commission, in each diocese, that will engage, encourage, empower and facilitate the emergence of passionate and focused advocacy of human rights and social justice issues at the provincial and diocesan levels, which will provide assistance to Dioceses in the implementation of the relevant aspects of the Provincial Strategic Action Plan with a view to effecting meaningful and transformational change in the Province in relation to Social Justice and Human Rights issues.
- c) Take steps to collect, collate, produce and provide useful resource materials on issues related to Social Justice and Human Rights for the constituent dioceses and congregations of the Province, and oversee the expansion, improvement and updating of the Provincial website with a view to providing Dioceses and congregations with practical resources on Social Justice and Human Rights issues.
- d) Foster and arrange for necessary and important dialogue among the several Standing Commissions of the Province with a view to unifying and consolidating the Province's strategic focus and Action Plan in relation to social justice and human rights issues.

Appointments were made to the Provincial Standing Committee, the Provincial Standing Commissions, the Codrington Board and the Anglican Consultative Council.

In conclusion, we express our collective gratitude to His Grace the Archbishop of the West Indies, Bishop Friday, the Clergy and people of the Diocese of the Windward Islands; to Her Excellency, the Governor General, Dame Susan Dougan and Prime Minister, the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves for the hospitality provided by the Government; the Dean and Staff of St George's Cathedral; the Technical Team including Mr. Alex Waterman, The Rev. Natalie Blake, The Rev. Michael Elliott, Mr. Montgomery Cupid and Mr. Kenneth Alleyne who made the hybrid Synod possible; the

Provincial Chancellor and Registrar for their wise counsel; the Diocesan Leadership for providing on-line daily services and to Bishop Garth Minott for his thorough, helpful and engaging reflections on: (a) The Church on the margins of society, (b) Where we are at present, (c) Being a Church of Hope, and finally to the Provincial Secretary for the overall organization of the Synod and the members of Synod for their patience and full participation.

In view of the foregoing, we leave the Provincial Synod strengthened in our fellowship in Christ and more determined to serve HIM.

Dated the 17th day of November, 2022

+ Howard Jamaica and the Cayman Islands
Archbishop of the West Indies.

END