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# HURON CHURCH NEWS

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## The Diocese welcomes Bishop Linda

By  
**Sandra Coulson**

**Rev. Marty Levesque**

Rt. Rev. Linda Nicholls, area bishop of Trent-Durham and bishop suffragan from the Diocese of Toronto, was elected coadjutor bishop by the Synod of the Diocese of Huron at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, on Saturday, Feb. 13.

Bishop Linda was elected among eight candidates as the first woman bishop in Huron and also the first bishop from outside the diocese since 1931.

It required three rounds of balloting for her to acquire majority of the vote among both the laity and the clergy, as required by the rules of the diocese. There were 216 lay delegates and 124 clergy at the Electoral Synod.

"I am delighted that people of Huron gathered in Synod have called the Rt. Rev. Linda Nicholls to the office of coadjutor bishop for the Diocese of Huron. She is a gifted and faithful leader who will help chart our future to that place where God-in-Christ wills us to be. I very much look forward to working with her", said Rt. Rev. Bob Bennett, the bishop of Huron, upon announcing the results.

As coadjutor bishop, Bishop Linda will automatically become the 13th bishop of Huron when Bishop Bennett retires.



After an embrace from Bishop Bob, Bishop Linda invited the other candidates to join her at the front of the cathedral. "I realized what a wonderful, strong, vibrant group of candidates you have," she told the assembled delegates to Synod. "We now work together for the sake of the Gospel."

The other candidates were

Rev. Canon Dr. Tim Connor, Ven. Jane Humphreys, Ven. Paul Millward, Ven. Tanya Phibbs, Ven. Sam Thomas, Rev. Canon Robert Towler, and Ven. Peter Townshend.

Bishop Linda led on the ballot through all three rounds of voting. After the second round, four candidates withdrew their names from consideration.

The diocese did not release the voting tallies to the public and Bishop Bob urged delegates not to post the results of each round of votes on social media. "We're trying to be sensitive to what the candidates are going through," he said. He spoke about his own experience as a three-time candidate for bishop, adding, "We came into this Synod as colleagues in ministry,

all of us, and we want to leave this Synod as colleagues in ministry."

Voting took place during heavy snowfall across parts of the diocese. Bishop Bob said diocesan leaders were monitoring the weather in the days running up to the Electoral Synod and had many discussions about postponing the election to the previously chosen snow date of Feb. 20 — the next Saturday — but decided to go ahead with the Feb. 13 date.

Bishop Nicholls was ordained a deacon on Nov. 3, 1985. A year later she was ordained a priest and on Feb. 2, 2008, she was consecrated bishop suffragan for the Diocese of Toronto.

Bishop Nicholls is co-chair of Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada, a member of Faith Worship and Ministry Committee of the Anglican Church of Canada, chair of Standing Committee on Religious Orders, Anglican Church of Canada House of Bishops, and episcopal member of Doctrine and Worship Committee, Diocese of Toronto. She earned a doctor of ministry degree from Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, in 2002 and was presented with an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Wycliffe in 2008).

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## The Three Cantors give thanks

By **Davor Milicevic**

**T**he Three Cantors returned on Feb. 22 to the place where they had started almost two decades ago. The sold-out performance at Grace Church in Brantford confirmed their amazing repertoire diversity and ability to connect with their audience.

The Three Cantors, three Anglican priests— David Pickett, William Cliff and Peter Wall, along with arranger and accompanist Angus Sinclair — gave their first concert at Grace Church in April 1997. Since then they have appeared on stage on 240 occasions supporting the efforts of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

The Brantford concert on Feb. 22 was called The Three Cantors Give Thanks which sounded a bit like a farewell show. But with the Three Cantors it is always more than meets the eye — starting with the fact that there are four of them on stage, and the fourth one being very much the player who keeps all that musical diversity together.

They indeed did give they thanks to people who have helped them on their extraordinary journey, starting with the Archdeacon Peter Townshend who initiated that journey and ending with the Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate of Canada. It turned out that 600 of their closest friends packed in an Anglican Church that night

also felt obliged to give thanks to the Cantors for the gift of music and their ministry in support of PWRDF. Archbishop Fred Hiltz personally expressed his gratitude and announced that the Three Cantors have raised \$1.4 million over the years in benefit of PWRDF.

So, was the Brantford performance the last one?

We sat down with the "fourth cantor", the quiet one, Angus Sinclair, few days after their concert.

What does Angus Sinclair, the organist at St. Paul Cathedral in London, Ontario, have to say about the concert and about 19 years of performing with the Three Cantors?

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Angus Sinclair (far right) has accompanied the Three Cantors for 19 years. Was their performance on Feb. 22 at Grace Church in Brantford the last one?

# 'Telling our story with passion and joy'

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**Rt. Rev. Bishop Linda Nicholls in conversation with Rev. Marty Levesque**

*HCN: If you could try to encapsulate in a word how do you feel right now, immediately after the election?*

**Nicholls:** Joyful would be a good word. Just trying to take an enormity of the moment, what it means to be elected by the Diocese, what does it mean to be their Diocesan Bishop down the road, delighted with the welcome I have received from the people as the day ended and getting ready to get on the board with the next steps because it was a long journey to get to this day.

**We have to be passionate about what we do for it's the joy that will speak most loudly.**

*HCN: You mentioned next steps. What is your first priority when you come to the Diocese of Huron?*

Once I am here, the first step will be to get to know the Diocese. To literally study the maps, to see where the parishes are, get out and visit, meet clergy, meet laity, hear people's stories they want to tell me, to read some of the stories of the history of this Diocese, a little bit of which I know but I'm sure I don't know the whole. To listen to the needs and concerns that are being expressed and to begin to get a sense of what is it that the Diocese needs going forward. I've seen some of that in a profile, I've seen some of that in the conversations I had with people at the meet and greets, but it is different now when you know that you are going to be responsible for it in the long run. I am looking very much forward to working with Bishop Bob in the coming months and trusting the wisdom and discernment of clergy to help me in this journey.

*HCN: As you went through different meet-and-greets, from Listowell to Chattam area, Brantford and then London, and then going through today, was there a moment in this whole process, in this whole journey, that you really felt that this is going to happen and the Holy Spirit is moving and you have been called to episcopal ministry here in the Diocese.*

There have been a couple of moments, and the first one happening very, very early on, when I was approached about considering this. For me I would not have said yes if I did not believe that at some level the Holy Spirit might have been calling me



to do this, if I had not believe that I have things I have to offer to this Diocese, and that God might want me to be of use here.

During the meet-and-greets it was more about of sense how much I did not know and realizing the enormity of the task if I get elected on this day. Today, the most anxious moment was prior to the first ballot, just having no idea whether the Diocese saw in me what they were seeking and being very clear throughout the whole process that this had to be the discernment of the Holy Spirit for the person who would be right for this Diocese. And if it was me I would be delighted but if it wasn't me that would be fine – and knowing that there were excellent candidates alongside me, so that first ballot was probably the most nerve-racking. From there, a sense that this might be what was going to happen. Finally, that last ballot moment when the results were announced and you go OK, And then the Bishop asked: Will you accept it. I'm thinking, my goodness, I've come all this way, this would not be the moment to say NO.

I did have some people along the way asking, well couldn't you redraw, I said I could, but I made this discernment early on and I am prepared to see it through the end because I do believe that God was calling me at least to offer my gifts. Now, they have been offered and the Diocese said we would like to use those gifts in Huron. So now we start this journey together.

*HCN: What are the most urgent issues and opportunities facing the Church and the Diocese today?*

People distrust institutions, and they particularly distrust the Church because we have been in the news for the all wrong reasons. We are facing a huge credibility gap with those around us and we have not kept pace with learning how to express the faith that is within us.

**We have a wonderful tradition in our Anglican heritage. We have many things that people can connect to.**

We have huge demographic shifts, we have people leaving farms and ending up in the cit-

ies, we have changes within the cities, we have immigration, we have so many things around us that are moving in new directions. And we have not been on top of this as a church. We have not actually asked what can we do to show them the love of Christ, to be their neighbour, to show them that God cares if they are in the neighbourhood.

We need to share our faith with joy, with vigour, with passion so that people can see that it's something good and lively and life-giving. Because just then they might want to ask us to tell them more about our faith.

We have a wonderful tradition in our Anglican heritage. We have many things that peo-

ple can connect to. We have rich tradition of music that comes anywhere from jazz vespers to Anglican chant, we have the richness of our liturgy that allows people to enter into the mystery of God.

The Church has to ask itself what is its place in the public square. We have allowed ourselves to be shuffled off to the side. We are not the only voice, we are not the most important voice but we are a voice within a wider scope of all the people in the community and we share a concern for a common good. And for that reason we have to speak up. We have to say when the things are not right, just or good. We need to say when something is wrong and we



St. Paul's Cathedral on Feb. 13: The Church prayed and the Church voted.

want to be part of the solution in partnership with our oecumenical and interfaith partners as well as the civic society, the government. It does not mean compromising our principles or our faith but it does mean being passionate and engaged in the wider community.

**The Church is meant to be community that demonstrates what Christ has done for us, with each other and then for the world around us.**

We have to listen together what is God calling us to do now. And I am always excited by that, always excited by the opportunities. Because I know that God is here, God is present, God is just waiting for us sometimes to wake up and notice and be willing to get out there and do something that shows the world that God through Christ matters and cares.

*HCN: How do you feel we can better communicate the good news?*

We do have to use the tools that we have around us. But the most important communication we have to do is that personal relationship with other people in which we share what Christ means to us.

People do not want a theological dissertation, they do not want a doctrinal argument, they want to know that it makes a difference to you, and if it does, what it means to you and can you articulate that. So we have to learn to tell our story and to tell it in a way that is winsome and that is honest and that recognizes failure in ourselves, and that recognizes pain and woundedness but recognizes also when and how Christ has been the healer, forgiver, the one who gives us life and hope.... We have to be passionate about what we do for it's the joy that will speak most loudly.

*HCN: What do you want the world to know about Jesus Christ?*

What I want people to know is that the love of God is there

for us all the time, everywhere, and it's a healing love, that would take us when we are most wounded and broken and we'll heal through the forgiveness that comes when you admit that you've screwed it up; the forgiveness that allows you to forgive yourself and then to forgive others; through the healing that comes from that knowing who you are is beloved in God and God wants to use all of who you are to share that good news and that love with others. And that's what I want people to do, just to show that love, that forgiveness.

And another piece of that for me has always been community. The Church is meant to be community that demonstrates what Christ has done for us, with each other and then for the world around us. We were created to live in community. God is community in the Trinity and that very Trinity is meant to feed and nurture us in community for the sake of each other. We do not exist for ourselves alone. We have to nurture that foundational life in Christ that every one of us is called to as those who know the love of God and then want to share it.



**All photos in this section: Huron Church News**  
"We have an election!" Coadjutor Bishop of Huron Linda Nicholls

## An exciting election in crucial times for Huron

By Rt. Rev. Bishop Terry Dance

First, I would want to offer my congratulations and the best wishes to Linda Nicholls who I consider to be a very good friend. She has been an outstanding bishop in Toronto, her impact on the church world-wide has been remarkable and she will bring a serious and significant skill set to the work of bishop in the Diocese of Huron. From that standpoint I think the election is very exciting.

It is also very exciting that for the first time in living memory the Diocese of Huron actually looked beyond its borders for the person that they would entrust with the job of being the chief shepherd. It is not a statement against the leadership that exists in the Diocese but the recognition that we are in a pivotal place in terms of



the history of the Diocese and a pivotal place in the history of the Church. It was not a time to be insular but a time to look for the best possible person and the best possible set of gifts. The Diocese and the Holy Spirit have said that Linda is that person.

As she comes here I suspect that the learning curve is

going to be significant. Not the learning curve in terms of what it means to be a bishop – that, she knows in spades – but for Linda the learning curve is going to be about coming to terms with just what it is what makes the Diocese of Huron – the Diocese of Huron. We are unique in our own way in the Canadian church; we are not Toronto, we are not Niagara, in spite of our proximity to both of them. We have our own way of going about things and our own way of being Church

The other challenge that she is going to face is that unlike Toronto and unlike Niagara, which are strongly urban dioceses, we are a predominantly rural diocese. We are facing significant challenges in terms of how do we go about the business of providing ordained ministry in areas that cannot afford it. There are no easy an-

swers but somehow the task of the Church over the next little while is going to be to find a way to rationalize what ministry needs to look like with our diminishing financial and physical abilities to meet that need.

There are no immediate answers but we do have a wealth of leaders in this church and if Linda is able to draw on the experience and the insights and the wisdom of the archdeacons and of the lay leaders and of the experienced clergy, I believe together they can begin to make the right decisions.

I really think that it is important as the new bishop comes in for the people of the Diocese to understand that they did not elect a miracle worker. The expectations of bishops can be huge, but the reality is that power of a bishop to affect change is not nearly what most folk think it is. I think

that power that Linda will have working in the Diocese will be based on her ability to work hand in hand with the clergy and lay leaders and to establish a trusting relationship.

I have always believed that the authority that we have is the authority that people give us. And that grows out of them knowing that we love them and then they in turn learn to love us. When that happens then there is potential for the future. And I really think for Linda that is where it is going to be: beginning to enter into a loving relationship with the people she does not know but the people that would put their trust in her.

Rt. Rev. Terry Dance served as the suffragan bishop in Huron (Bishop of Norfolk) till the end of 2015.

## Huron's long tradition of episcopal elections

The first Bishop of Huron, Benjamin Cronyn, was elected in London, Ontario, on July 8, 1857.

According to a London Free Press column by historian J. J. Talman (September 23, 1939): "The election of Benjamin Cronyn as the first Bishop of Huron in July, 1857, was not only a significant Western Ontario event, but it was most important in the history of the development of colonial church government, for it was the first Episcopal election in the British Empire.

The (Toronto) Daily Globe was delighted. Even before the election, it had said:

"To those who can look back 20 years on the history of this Province, the [London] proceedings... must bring home vividly the great change that has passed over our country. But a few years it is since Dr. Strachan [Bishop of Toronto] sat in the Executive Council of Canada and controlled with his strong will all public affairs... Only to those who can recall the days of ancient Toryism can the spectacle be fully enjoyed, of Dr.

John Strachan sitting in a Synod with unanointed layman."

To the Globe, the vote was "a death blow to Puseyism and High Churchism in the Canadian church. It introduces a healthful new element – the Clergy are no longer to be the Church, but the whole Christian people."

(From: A Light in the Forest: 150 years of the Diocese of Huron, by Mark Richardson, published by the Diocese of Huron, 2008)

## Welcoming service for Coadjutor Bishop Nicholls on April 16

A Service of Celebration and Welcoming for the Right Rev'd Linda Nicholls, coadjutor bishop of Huron will take place on Saturday, April 16th at the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, London at 1:00 pm.

A light reception will follow in the Great Hall.