

## General Synod Archives



## [26th General Synod Meeting in Regina]

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**Text:** The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada meets next month at a time, in the words of its leaders, when values and issues are changing rapidly and the "very possibility of 'faith' as a credible stance of life has been questioned."

The comment of the long-range planning committee in its introductions to reports to the 26th synod, meeting in Regina May 3-11, is underlined by Archbishop Edward W. Scott, primate of the church.

In a report prepared for the assembly he says if Anglicans are to respond to the demanding issues before them and to give leadership in complex situations they will need, among other things, "a greater sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit" and to display "greater willingness to make hard decisions." He may expand upon this when he officially opens the assembly in St. Paul's Cathedral May 3.

About 290 members of synod, clerical and lay, from the 28 dioceses of the church will attend the sessions in Regina's Hotel Saskatchewan.

Four main topics or themes have been set out for discussion: quality of life and community, of faith, of ministry and of the church. The themes provide opportunity for debate and decision on a wide range of social problems disturbing the church and the country in the 1970s.

A preamble, prepared by Dean Herbert O'Driscoll, to a report of the long-range planning committee says:

"To some extent it could be said that the criteria of faith in previous decades were quantitative. The strength of the church tended to be judged by quantities (that is, activities, budget) and faith tended to be seen in terms of private piety and attendance at worship...

Such categories have been found, not so much to be discredited, but to be inadequate...Between us and the comparative innocence of the late '50s too much has been said, too many paperbacks written, too many tides of opinion have flowed for everything to remain as it was.

In the 1970s the many options of a plural society vary from actual alternatives to the Christian faith to a whole spectrum of attitude and styles within the Christian faith itself...

Faith is no longer a piece of familiar furniture placed securely in the living room of the mind."

The committee says further, in another report on the quality of life and community, that the rate of change in the world "continues to be a major factor in challenging individuals and institutions to be flexible."

The free-wheeling tone of the committee's observations may typify the free and frank discussion expected at this synod with members participating more fully than in the past.

Six sessions - totalling 13 hours - have been scheduled for group discussion. Each session will bear upon a particular issue. Resolutions formulated by these groups will be compiled and sent to plenary

formulated by these groups will be correlated and sent to plenary sessions for decision and policy direction. Committee reports and resolutions go directly to the plenary meetings.

The synod meets every two years. Its last meeting was in Niagara Falls, Ont., in February, 1971, when some of its sessions were held jointly with those of the general council of the United Church of Canada which also meets biennially.

It was the first time in the history of Canada's largest Protestant denominations that their highest courts had met together.

Negotiations for organic union of the churches have been under way for more than a quarter-century but no definitive move on union will be taken at this synod.

Members of synod are the 55 bishops from the four ecclesiastical provinces of Canada (Quebec and the Atlantic provinces), Ontario, Rupert's Land and British Columbia and clergy and laity chosen by the dioceses with a youth delegation of 15.

At least 25 women, seven of them from the youth delegation, are among the lay members along with eight observers from Anglican Church Women who participate in discussions but do not vote.

Among controversial topics before the synod will be that of abortion and here the views of the women are expected to be expressed freely.

A strong bloc of women commissioners forced the abortion issue to the floor of the general council of the United Church two years ago when that church went on record as accepting abortion in certain social, economic and therapeutic circumstances. The United Church is the only Christian church to take such a stand but it does not support abortion on demand.

The Anglican Church opposes abortion and one of the questions to be posed at this synod by one committee, the task force on human life, is: "What does it mean to be human if the foetus can be aborted?"

Other questions also are posed by the task force in its report on human life and community:

"Who am I if bodily organs can be transplanted?"

"What quality of life are people living in our cities?"

"Why should anyone go to the moon when there are vast needs and agonies on the earth?"

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