

TRIBUTES TO BISHOP TOM CORSTON

Primate Linda Nicholls

As a privileged cleric in southern Ontario I was always inspired by the gentle grace with which +Tom faced the challenging ministry circumstances in northern Ontario and Quebec. Whether driving through snowstorms or travelling by skidoo; facing the challenges of isolated communities or the ongoing healing needs of Indigenous communities Bishop Tom had good humour, an inner peace and constant grace that those around him felt. May the memories of his life and ministry bring a smile to all who knew him as we give thanks to God for his faithfulness!

Archbishop Fred Hiltz (Assisting Bishop – Diocese of Moosonee)

"Signed with the cross and marked as Christ's own forever" Tom will always be remembered as a life long follower of Jesus and a life long learner, always eager to gather with others to reflect on the Gospel of the day and to gain fresh insights for faithful living. In his ministry as a deacon and priest Tom was simply "modest, humble and constant in his labors". (p.47, The Book of Common Prayer) He had a big heart for Moosonee and for Algoma too, having served parishes in both dioceses with great joy.

When he was called, consecrated and installed as the 9th Bishop of Moosonee on July 6, 2010 Tom embraced his care of the diocese with much enthusiasm travelling from community to community, preaching and teaching, confirming hundreds of young people, offering counsel to the clergy, participating in the gatherings of the Great Chapters and enjoying the feasts that accompanied every event! With modesty Tom often described his ministry as bishop as "transitional" - helping the people to discern a way forward in times marked by the inter generational trauma of the Residential Schools, a decline in vocations to ordained ministry, the closure of a number of parishes, and significant financial challenges. When the Diocese became an Area Mission of The Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario in 2011 with the Metropolitan serving as the Diocesan Bishop Tom was quite content, even in retirement, to serve as Assistant Bishop with Archbishop Colin Johnson. In more recent years he has served and as an elder bishop whose vast knowledge of Moosonee has been a great blessing to our current Archbishop, Anne Germond.

No recognition of Tom's Ministry would be complete without an acknowledgement of Ruth's abiding love and encouragement. He often spoke how blessed he was by her support. Family life was important to Tom as indeed it is to us all.

As the people of Moosonee, we are especially grateful that in retirement Tom wrote memoirs of ministry. Not surprisingly they are full of wonderful stories, all of which will be of enormous value for The Archives of Moosonee, The Council of The North and The General Synod. We are grateful too for the School for Ministry Tom established and is now being re-vitalized. His vision for such a school is an important part of his legacy as our bishop.

I have often thought that Tom's entire ministry has been a true reflection of faithfulness to one of the most important of vows made at ordination- "Will you in all things seek not your glory but the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ?" (p. 656, The Ordination of a Deacon, The Book of Alternative Services). Tom made good on that promise. It was never "all about Tom". It was as he would often say- sometimes with laughter, sometimes with tears - "All for Jesus, all for Jesus, this our song shall always be".

So friends we commend Tom to the Lord he loved and served so faithfully, praying with confidence, Receive, O Lord, your servant for he is returning to you; May your angels surround and your saints welcome him in peace; May he gaze upon you and enjoy the blessedness of perfect rest. Amen.

Archbishop Colin Johnson (retired Diocese of Toronto)

"Bishop Tom was a storyteller! And the stories told a lot about the man who told them: they were generous, funny, self-deprecating, and full of warmth. They revealed his love for the church and most especially for the people he served. They preserved an oral history of the communities he was part of. In the tradition of our Lord, Bishop Tom told stories to remind us who we are, and more importantly, whose we are - beloved children of God, sisters and brothers of Jesus. He had the heart of a pastor and the wellbeing of the people committed to his charge' was always foremost in his thoughts. Perhaps his most enduring legacy will be the School of Ministry he established in Moosonee and those who trained there, some later ordained, to serve as teachers and pastors in their own communities."

Bishop Stephen Andrews (Wycliffe College)

As we mourn the death of our friend and colleague, Tom Corston, Fawna and I send our deepest sympathies to Ruth, the boys and their spouses, and Fran, his mother. He was a loyal servant of the Church, to be sure, but above all, he was a devoted husband, father and son.

We came to know Tom first as our parish priest in Sudbury. We warmed to him quickly, for we saw within him the heart and manner of a country parson: a dutiful visitor, a story-teller, and someone who understood and appreciated the simple things of life. He loved to sing and to host parties. He was quick to laugh and had a disarmingly infectious smile. He enjoyed people, and there was never a public occasion where he did not have a word of encouragement or a bit of wisdom to share. In the course of his thirty-five years of parish ministry, he was a mentor to a number of younger clergy. Indeed, his experience as a seasoned parish priest with a wide ministry of the church in the dioceses of Moosonee, Fredericton and Algoma, gave him great credibility in the House of Bishops and served him well when facing some of the unique challenges of episcopal ministry in the Canadian north.

Tom was greatly loved. I remember that, among the 400 gathered for his consecration in Timmins in 2010, was a group who had endured a fourteen-hour bus ride to be there! I think part of the reason people were drawn to him is that he wore his heart on his sleeve, and he could still get choked up when recounting the story of God's call in his life. As we pray for comfort for all those who grieve his loss, we also give thanks for his faithful witness and his embodiment of Christ's love to those whom he served.



Bishop Phil Poole (retired Diocese of Toronto)

+Tom was a happy and faithful parish priest who, unlike some, was not enamoured by the lure of episcopal ministry. It took considerable persuading to encourage him to allow his name to stand for election as a Bishop in the Church in the first place. He resisted strongly. However, as always, Tom was open to saying "Yes" to whatever God called him to do in his life. When synod, empowered by the Holy Spirit, elected Tom as Bishop he served faithfully, passionately, diligently and with distinction. When he "retired", and I use the word loosely, it was not too long before he again said "Yes" to God's call and he was back serving God's people in parish ministry. Tom's was a life of service.

Moosonee is not Southern Ontario as anyone living there is happy to quickly point out! There are enormous advantages to living in the beauty of that land but there are some resulting challenges. One in particular difficulty that the church in the north faces is the preparation of candidates for sacred ministry. In collaboration with then Archbishop Colin Johnson, Tom founded the Diocese of Moosonee School for Ministry bringing in guest lecturers to augment excellent local teachers to provide a wide base of learning including biblical, preaching, leadership, stewardship, church history, liturgy and theology. Men and women, many of whom drove 10 hours to attend "modules" and be prepared in this way, have gone on to serve the church as lay and ordained leaders. Tom sought creative solutions to challenges.

You cannot say Tom Corston without mentioning Ruth in the same sentence. Ministry for them was a shared enterprise flowing from their shared commitment to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Tom quite simply could not have done what he did in ministry without the support of his rock and helpmate. They sacrificed much to serve the church and I know, had they the opportunity to do it all over again, they absolutely would. Well done, good and faithful servant.

**Chief Daisy House (Chisasibi)
-in an e-mail to Archbishop Germond**

It's so hard to imagine this world without Bishop Corston. I really appreciated his guidance and support during the challenging times in our community.

He was so instrumental along with your (+Anne's) help in providing much needed ministry services for our community with the eventual hiring of Reverend Gladys Matoush as our full time Minister for St Philip's Anglican Church and with the help and support of her husband reverend George Matoush.

It's a big loss. Bishop Corston was such a great man with such a kind heart. He will be greatly missed. We send our deepest condolences to his family and loved ones. Moreover, to you too as I'm certain you have fond memories of working with him as a colleague and dear friend. I know I will surely miss him. Thank you for everything you both did and continue to do to support our community.

Archdeacon Larry Armstrong (Diocese of Moosonee)

"Bishop Tom was a very good friend to Moosonee. I will ever remember him not just as Bishop but as a very dear friend. He was a huge influence on my life and ministry, showing me in many ways and at many times the meaning of compassion. In tough times and difficult situations, he would often say, "Such is the Church" and "All for Jesus" not just as witty words spoken for amusement, but expressions of kindness, understanding, and love."



Canon Patricia Dorland (CFO – Diocese of Moosonee)

A Tribute to Bishop Thomas Alexander Corston

Some deep thinking Christians would say that our journey is all about relationship and story; our relationship with God and our neighbor and how we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the world and witness to that story as we share our Christian journey in our families and in the community.

Bishop Tom seemed to know this wisdom very well as at every opportunity he would proclaim the Gospel and he loved to tell stories. He stated that one of his main occupations when he retired was to write a book to share his story of who he was as a faithful servant of God ministering to God's people. He had lots of stories to tell while living in the Diocese of Moosonee, both as a priest and much later as a bishop. A good story teller is an intentional listener and an observer of people. A good story teller sees the good, the not so good and the brokenness in people and shares all the stories with compassion and love. A good story teller laughs at himself and with others. Bishop Tom had the gift and art of story telling.

Bishop Tom also had more than a few favourite sayings, such as the well known "All for Jesus, all for Jesus" and another "Ye have not because ye ask not."

Bishop Tom was elected the 9th Bishop of Moosonee as God's timing is perfect. At a time when our diocese was coming to the cusp of important decision-making, Bishop Tom was at the helm. He had the history of our diocese in his memory. He had worked in our diocese as a priest and so knew the people and the communities. He was very much aware of our diocesan dynamics as we entered into a more engaged partnership with our First Nations communities and people.

Bishop Tom would admit "I am a very big boy" and indeed Bishop Tom did have a very big compassionate heart, a very big love for Jesus and a very immense sense of what being a follower of Jesus was all about. May God enfold Bishop Tom in His ever-loving arms.

(my memories of Bishop Tom are highlighted by him calling me up in 2011 and saying he found my application for candidate to the diaconate, asking me if I was still interested and then saying "Well deary, we need to get moving on this", him offering to officiate at my mother's funeral and ministering pastorally to our family, and him sending me emails of encouragement when I myself was receiving cancer treatment.)

The Rev. Canon Dr. John Gibaut (Thorneloe University)

"Before the pandemic struck, and before Bishop Tom was ill, my son Peter visited us in Sudbury, and went to the Church of the Epiphany with me on Sunday. Tom was the preacher and celebrant, and chatted with Peter briefly afterwards. Peter's comment about Tom was spot on: 'He's the real thing.' Tom's authenticity as a human being, as a Christian, husband, father, son, brother, bishop, priest, and friend shone in particular ways in the last months of his life. He was indeed, 'the real thing'."



**Bishop Tom awarded
Doctorate of of Sacred Theology Degree (Thorneloe University)**



The Rev. Deborah Lonergan-Freake (Diocese of Moosonee)

How does one properly pay tribute to someone who has been a cherished friend for so many years. I believe when I first met Tom Corston he was a young priest serving in Gogama. That was in the early 1980s, so we do go back. It seems as if I have always known him. One of the traits that first caught my attention was Tom's sense of humour, almost as big and tall as he was and how much he enjoyed a good rant. As I got to know him more, his dedication and love for the Diocese of Moosonee became the characteristic I noticed the most about him. He gave so much time, talent and effort to Moosonee over the course of his life and career. Tom was an energetic priest – always carrying the Gospel to the people he served and to people he met along the way. It's hard to find anyone in Moosonee who does not know and respect him, even if they are not members of the Church. Reverend Tom, as he was back then, had a deep affection and respect for the hard-working priests who came before him and was always happy to share a story about people like the Rev. John Long and Bishop John Watton, under whom he served for some years. I used to tell +Tom that he held Moosonee's history in his memory.

Tom left Moosonee for a relatively short while and served the Church in the Diocese of Fredericton and it was there he met his life long love and wife, Ruth. Tom was proud of his heritage as an Indigenous man and enormously proud of his family – his beloved wife, Ruth, and their two sons, Andrew and Stephen, who meant so much to their Dad. He was proud of his father and told stories about him often. Of course, his mother, Frances, was always in his heart, as were his sisters and their families. Despite how much he worked, Tom's love for his family was always of prime importance to him.

Bishop Tom gave much to the Anglican Church, mostly to the Diocese of Moosonee through which he served God and God's people. His stories and sense of humour endeared him to many people as he moved from parish to parish, eventually being called by God to lead Moosonee as Bishop. He expected much of himself and those who worked with him. He had high standards and could teach a lesson on Church history, formation or liturgics without thought. It was part of the fabric of who he was and he relished opportunities to teach others. His influence on other clergy and lay people was significant.

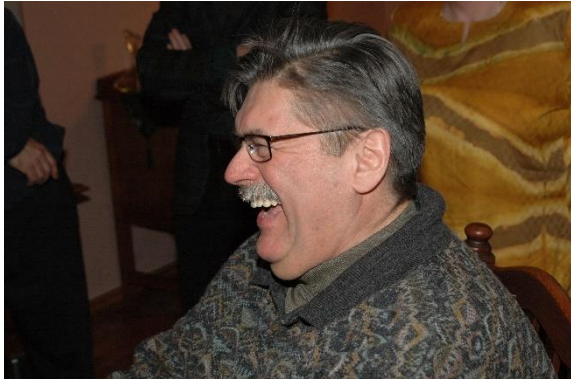
Bishop Tom became the 9th Bishop of Moosonee at a time of challenge in the Church and in the Diocese of Moosonee. Always full of ideas and never one to give up, +Tom courageously led Moosonee in new paths and found new ways of taking Moosonee into the future. Hard decisions were made and must have taken their toll on him, but he forged on. On the day it was decided that the Bishop's official residence, Bishopstope, had to be sold, he and I sat in his office and cried together. God led Bishop Tom to make the hard decisions but also the innovative decisions which will ultimately save and bring new life to a grand old diocese. It was "ministry on the ground" and cuts at the top. His ideas and innovations led to the formation of the Moosonee School for Ministry which has led to the ordination of many servants of God who work across the Diocese. So often after reaching difficult decisions, he'd take a deep breath and exclaim: "All for Jesus, All for Jesus!"

To me, Bishop Tom was a friend, mentor, colleague and bishop. I learned so much from him; he had a strong influence on my life and I am grateful to him. He was always my go to source of wisdom. I know many are saddened by his death but Tom trusted God with his life and we must entrust Bishop Tom to God, who created Tom and loved him and who Tom followed all his life. I pray "that nothing good in [Bishop Tom's] life will be lost, but will be of benefit to the world; and that everything in which he was great will continue to mean much to us now that he is dead." (BAS pg 602) I have no doubt that as he entered into eternal rest, Tom heard God's welcome: Well done good and faithful servant.

**A Tribute in Honour of Bishop Tom at Church of the Epiphany (Sudbury)
– from the Church Wardens, both Past and Present**

For many years Bishop Tom was a wonderful priest, pastor, bishop and friend for so many in the Church of the Epiphany. Bishop Tom was a real "people person." He was kind, sensitive and caring toward everyone who knew him. Bishop Tom always held a very special place in his heart for the elderly, and for anyone in need. Always happy to pitch in and help, Bishop Tom was lovingly, actively engaged in all areas of ministry within the Epiphany Community. Bishop Tom is well remembered as a gifted storyteller, who occasionally took delight in gossip and hyperbole. Bishop Tom had a wonderful ability to laugh at himself and his foibles. At church luncheons and community dinners, several of us remember Bishop Tom jokingly say things like, how he was "certain there would be no salads in heaven!" We all loved him for his good and easy-going sense of humour. Bishop Tom will forever be remembered as being a man of deep and abiding faith. He took great joy in teaching others about the Christian faith and the Anglican Tradition. He was masterful in his abilities to teach Christian education and formation. Several members in the Epiphany Community have fond memories of his fun and meaningful Confirmation Classes. Bishop Tom made a lasting impression on all those who he taught and helped form in the Christian faith through the life of the Church. He also made a strong, lasting impression upon those he trained to serve as Lay Readers. Bishop Tom never failed to provide gentle but firm guidance for everyone who helped serve in any area of ministry at the Church of the Epiphany. Bishop Tom had a way with babies at baptism. He is fondly remembered for the "special touch" he had with babies at their baptism. There are members at Epiphany who can recall being in the congregation for numerous services with baptism; not once do they remember a baby crying when he or she was being baptized by Bishop Tom. Above all else, and perhaps most importantly, we remember Bishop Tom as a man who loved and cherished his dear family. A devote and loving husband, Bishop Tom had tremendous love, affection and admiration for his dear wife Ruth. His sons, Andrew and Stephen, were truly Bishop Tom's pride and joy. His boys were the apples of Bishop Tom's eyes. He absolutely adored his beloved family.

As Wardens for the Church of the Epiphany, both past and present, we are grateful for the prayers and support of our Archbishop, and of so many people across the Diocese of Algoma and beyond. We also thank everyone for keeping all of the Corston family in your prayers at this time. Finally, and most especially, we are so very grateful to the faithful, dedicated members of our parish community who have loved, cared for, and supported Bishop Tom through all of his years of ministry with us. We are all better for having known Bishop Tom and for being blessed by his unforgettable, God-given ministry that will always be remembered with love and thanksgiving at the Church of the Epiphany.



Anne Dyas (Diocese of Moosonee)

Such a sad time yet it is in my heart to try and express my feelings. I thank you for your request and for undertaking this special tribute of and for Bishop Tom and his ministry.

Several years ago I was asked to be the Chair of the committee searching for a new Bishop for the Diocese of Moosonee. A few nominations arrived including, almost at the closing date, a nomination for the Rev. Tom Corston.

At that time in his life Tom was looking forward to retirement with his wife Ruth yet felt called, with some reluctance I believe, to allow his name to stand.

Surprisingly it took more than one ballot to determine the outcome but Rev. Tom became Bishop Tom Corston of Moosonee. Tom took hold of the reins immediately and made some sweeping changes when it became apparent the Diocese was in financial straits: office cuts, sale of Bishophurst, and the decision to become a Mission diocese amongst them and most importantly to somehow continue parish ministry without funds to pay for clergy.

There had been talk for some years of "baptismal ministry" but nothing was done about it until Tom became our Bishop and began consultations across the Canadian Anglican Communion only to find no-one who had made a concerted effort to make the necessary changes for that to happen.

A good leader will draw his people along with him and such was Bishop Tom's enthusiasm for the idea of raising up local clergy in their baptismal ministry that, together with these enthusiastic followers a School of Ministry became a reality; the teachers being the talented clergy already in place in this diocese. The students came from parishes north, east, south and west across the diocese. Once the courses were complete the students were submitted to a local form of A.C.P.O. and the majority became ordained Deacons and were named as Deacons-in-charge of the parishes where they were raised.

As I consider the work and gifts Bishop Tom and his wife Ruth gave so unselfishly to the Diocese of Moosonee, I am overwhelmingly grateful. Bishop Tom, by his courageous actions, has given this diocese hope for the future. We must not let him down.



Canon Diane Hilpert-McIlroy (Diocese of Moosonee and Algoma)

Bishop Tom had a vision of raising local people to ministry. He believed that was the answer for remote areas and he looked for people who displayed gifts for ministry and a call to serve in the Diocese of Moosonee.

In his own words this is what he envisioned for the next school, or this is where he saw the growing edges of his priests and deacons, to be. He strongly believed that issues of sexuality ought not to be a barrier. He was correct in his assessment of the needs of his clergy.

- *the nature of obedience and authority under which clergy live their vocation*
- *spiritual resources for preparing for the vocational journey*
- *Diocese of Moosonee's unique history and role in the Anglican Church of Canada*
- *the Anglican Communion's 5 marks of mission*
- *and issues in human sexuality*

The Rev. Canon Grace Delaney (Diocese of Moosonee)

I was thinking of Bishop Tom. I was thinking of a time he was here for a confirmation. He had two young people, one was a young boy who truly loved being in Sunday School learning and knowing God, and was always at church. The other was a young girl who has never held a conversation because she was Down Syndrome. When it was her turn to kneel before Bishop Tom, she put her long hair and head on the stool she was to kneel on and Tom had to get her to sit up. I always have that in the back of my mind, how a child of Down Syndrome could see and recognize the devout Christianity in a person, to humble herself before him. That was really special for me and I can only imagine how he must have felt. This seems so personal for me and I am not sure if it is something he would want people to know.

There is so much he did for the diocese, not just as bishop but before as deacon and priest. I met his Mom who loved them dearly. When I met Ruth and Bishop Tom, I fell in love with them. He pioneered much ground for Indigenous people, along with some of our other people, gently and solidly walking with the truth and faith in his love for the Lord. He always wanted the very best for our people without overlooking that the earth we walk on belongs to all who are inhabiting the place, time and space.

I think he would be so proud of us continuing on to recognize the work that our Lord does through each one is always kept a priority, and that we share our Creator's Gospel with one another, in order for us to grow together in the steps our Lord sets for each of us. I can't wait to read his memoirs.

Condolences to you and all who worked and shared common vision with our dear Bishop Tom Corston.

The Rev. Catherine Murkin (Diocese of Algoma – previously Moosonee)

+Tom both encouraged me and kept me on my toes. He had a great sense of humour but didn't tolerate foolishness or sloppiness when it came to liturgy. His love for Jesus was evident as was his love and care for the diocese of Moosonee, and all those under his care. I will always remember how his presence filled a room and the wonderful stories he told. At St Peter's On The Rock in Kirkland Lake we looked forward with excitement and delight to his and Ruth's visits.

He was a person I could turn to for advice when dealing with difficult situations. His love for Jesus was inspirational and modeled for me what it looked like to be a priest.

I will miss him.

Marthe Brown (Diocese of Moosonee Archivist – Laurentian University)

Thank you very much for taking the time to write to me to inform me of Bishop Tom's death.

I am saddened by this news but at the same time I realise that he no longer has to suffer. The phrase "rest in peace" is very meaningful on such an occasion. My thoughts are with his family and also with all those who frequented Bishop Tom and who were touched by his generosity and kindness.

A tribute to the Rt. Rev. Tom Corston from the Deanery of Sudbury – Manitoulin (Diocese of Algoma)

From the many memories that I have of the ministry of Tom Corston within this Deanery, I believe my favourite is the fact that he would often refer to the Deanery as a "Country Club" Deanery. This appellation was influenced by the fact that each year one of the clergy would host a summer BBQ (the late Canon Bain Peever) at his home on a lake on Manitoulin Island as well as the fact that our Christmas parties were feasts. It was probably also influenced by the fact that many of our Clericus meetings took place outside of Sudbury at places such as Camp Manitou or St. Christopher's Church in McGregor Bay and would involve a boating excursion. Tom would always make these events enjoyable and so he was also one of the reasons that the "Country Club Deanery" was an appropriate description of the joy-filled gatherings of the clergy in this Deanery. This attitude also probably made it easier for him to attract retired bishops to offer Quiet Days in Advent and Lent - events which enriched our lives. His joy in service and his great sense of humour have left their mark on this Deanery. On behalf of the clergy who currently serve in this Deanery, in which Tom served as Archdeacon before taking on his role as the Bishop of Moosonee, I give thanks to God for the chance we had to work alongside this humble and generous servant of Jesus.

The Ven. Glen Miller
current Archdeacon of Sudbury-Manitoulin



We will miss you and your shining light, Bishop Tom!

***Rest Eternal Grant Unto Him, O Lord,
And Let Light Perpetual Shine Upon Him***



Photos contained herein courtesy of Colin Germond, Stephen Andrews, and various media outlets.