



Anglican Network in Canada

5 September 2008

Open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Anglican Communion

After consulting with my Primate, Archbishop Gregory Venables, I report with great sadness that two Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) churches under my jurisdiction – St Matthews (Abbotsford, BC) and St Matthias and St Luke's (Vancouver, BC) – received letters on 26 August 2008, informing them that the Bishop of New Westminster had taken action on 10 July 2008 to seize control of those parish properties. The letters also notified the wardens, trustees and parish councils that Bishop Michael Ingham had dismissed and replaced them and ordered the clergy to vacate the church buildings by mid-September. It is clear that our other two ANiC parishes in Vancouver, St. John's Shaughnessy and Church of the Good Shepherd, will receive the same action in the near future.

This is the fourth Canadian diocese to act in this way against ANiC churches which have come under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. The actions of two of the other dioceses have led to the secular legal courts. This latest action by the Diocese of New Westminster almost certainly will end in the courts as well and is particularly ironic given these letters implementing such hostile action arrived the same day we received the Archbishop of Canterbury's appraisal of the Lambeth Conference, emphasizing the need to build trust.

The Anglican Network in Canada and our parishes have made repeated attempts over this past year to seek a negotiated or mediated settlement – both at the Provincial and Diocesan level. All overtures have been rebuffed. In my 11 April 2008 letter to the Primate and House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, I appealed to them to enter into negotiations with us rather than pursue litigation, saying:

I think we can all agree that such litigation has been damaging for the mission of the church and is a poor witness to the very people with whom we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ... We would like to propose a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity... to discuss the possibility of pursuing alternate dispute resolution mechanisms... to address the outstanding issues between the ANiC parishes and the ACoC bishops or dioceses. It would be much better for everyone concerned if we could work out some interim arrangements between ourselves without the necessity of resorting to the civil courts... In the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6, we pray that you will consider meeting with us in a spirit of peace and in a more amicable setting to discuss the way forward in light of the profound theological differences that have arisen between us and that are currently being addressed in the global Anglican Communion. Peaceful negotiations will always leave the door to future reconciliation open but we fear that further litigation will lead to irreparable harm that will close that door forever.

In his recent letter, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that the just-concluded Lambeth conference was designed to meet the Communion's chief need: "*rebuilding of relationships*

– *the rebuilding of trust in one another – and of confidence in our Anglican identity*”. The Diocese of New Westminster’s letters, however, demanded keys to the parish facilities and an inventory of all parish possessions. Previous letters from the diocese indicated that all parishioners who support these clergy should vacate with them.

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s letter said the Lambeth Conference had “...*no appetite for revising Resolution 1.10 of Lambeth 1998*” – the resolution that this very same diocese unilaterally defied by proceeding with same sex blessings only a few short years after this Resolution was passed. And, despite repeated affirmations by the Primates of the Communion’s position on this matter and calls for repentance, the diocese has continued to disregard these calls. Instead, the Diocese seeks to evict all clergy and congregations who wish to remain faithful to Lambeth Resolution 1.10 – and historic Christian doctrine.

The Archbishop of Canterbury’s letter said the Conference showed “...*much support for the idea of a ‘Pastoral Forum’ as a means of addressing present and future tensions...*” Last week’s action by the Diocese of New Westminster shows yet again that unless this Pastoral Forum provides immediate, equal or greater protection from such dioceses there can be no reasonable expectation of adequate safety. This is even more significant given the stated objective of the Pastoral Forum is to build trust.

These hostile actions by the diocese once again underscore the non-equivalency of the three moratoria called for by the Windsor Continuation Group. The causal relationship behind these actions must be acknowledged and the remedy adjusted appropriately. It is the actions by the Anglican Church of Canada and its dioceses as well as by the Episcopal Church that are *causing* faithful parishes to flee to safety. These must be addressed and the breaches of trust repaired *before* provincial incursions can possibly cease let alone be reversed.

The unwillingness of the revisionist provinces and dioceses to accept the repeated offers of negotiation and mediation shows a commitment to power and property above reconciliation. While the aggressive hostile assaults and litigation continues, trust cannot be restored.

We pray for wisdom and discernment as you strive to restore our Communion – through repentance – to wholeness and effective witness for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

With many blessings and prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script. To the left of the signature is a small cross symbol (+).

The Right Reverend Donald Harvey
Moderator, Anglican Network in Canada