

## A Pastoral Statement from the Primate and Metropolitans of the Anglican Church of Canada

**November 29, 2007** -- *The following pastoral statement is released to the Church by the Primate and the Metropolitan Archbishops of each of the four ecclesiastical provinces.*

Greetings in the name of the One who was, who is, and who is to come -- our Lord Jesus Christ

The *Mission Statement* of the Anglican Church of Canada opens with these statements: "As a partner in the worldwide Anglican Communion and in the universal Church, we proclaim and celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ in worship and in action. We value our heritage of Biblical faith, reason, liturgy, tradition, bishops and synods and the rich variety of our life in community."

It is fundamental to the values and mission of our Church that we welcome and respect freedom of individual conscience and the theological convictions of a diverse membership. Our General Synods have consistently strived to honour every voice as the Church works through contentious and difficult issues before it. This is particularly true in the way the Church has endeavoured to address matters of human sexuality including the blessing of same-sex unions.

The report of the Primate's Theological Commission commonly known as the *St. Michael Report* has described this issue as matter of doctrine but not core doctrine. General Synod concurred with this opinion last June. The *St. Michael Report* also declared that the matter need not be a *Communion-breaking issue*.

It is in this context that we deplore recent actions on the part of the Primate and General Synod of the Province of the Southern Cone to extend its jurisdiction into Canada through the Essentials Network Conference. This action breaks fellowship within the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Communion.

We affirm the statement unanimously agreed to by the Council of General Synod which appeals to the Archbishop of Canterbury "to make clear that such actions are not a valid expression of Anglicanism." We too appeal to him in his capacity as one of the instruments of communion and as chair of the Primates' Meeting to address the very serious issues raised by this intervention.

The actions by the Primate of the Southern Cone are not necessary. Our bishops have made adequate and appropriate provision for the pastoral care and episcopal support of all members of the Anglican Church of Canada, including those who find themselves in conscientious disagreement with the view of their bishop and synod over the blessing of same-sex unions. These provisions, contained in the document known as *Shared Episcopal Ministry*, were adopted by the House of Bishops and commended by the panel of reference appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The actions by the Primate of the Southern Cone are also inappropriate. They contravene ancient canons of the Church going as far back as the 4th century, as well as statements of the Lambeth Conference, the Windsor report and the Communique from the Primates' Meeting earlier this year. Furthermore these actions violate Canon XVII of the Anglican Church of Canada which states that "No Bishop priest or deacon shall exercise ordained ministry in a diocese without the license or temporary permission of the Diocesan Bishop."

Any ministry exercised in Canada by those received into the Province of the Southern Cone after voluntarily relinquishing the exercise of their ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada is inappropriate, unwelcome and invalid. We are aware that some bishops have, or will be making statements to that effect in their own dioceses.

In the meantime we rejoice in this season of Advent in which we once again begin that great journey of tracing the steps of our Lord's most holy life through the liturgy of a new year.

We rejoice in the gift of word and sacrament. We rejoice in the gift of our baptism and in the great gift of the Eucharist. We rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth and empowers us to proclaim the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ in word and action.

We respect the diversity of opinion in our Church over many issues. We respect the manner in which we take counsel together and honour the intention of all those who even in the midst of struggle desire to remain within the fellowship of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Let us renew our trust in the One who holds us together in the embrace of His love and peace.

We call all Anglicans to a renewed emphasis on mission and prayer for faithful witness in the service of the gospel within our parishes and across the world.

In him whose Advent sets us free.

*The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz, Archbishop and Primate The Most Rev. Terry Buckle, Archbishop and Metropolitan of British Columbia and Yukon The Most Rev. John Clarke, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Rupert's Land The Most Rev. Caleb Lawrence, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Ontario The Most Rev. Bruce Stavert, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Canada*