

Letter from Archbishop Gregory Venables, read 22 November 2007 at the Anglican Network in Canada national conference in Burlington, Ontario

Greetings once again from the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America where we are thanking God that Bishop Don Harvey is now a part of this Province. As such he remains in active Episcopal ministry within the Anglican Communion.

He is of course already a well known and much loved colleague and we are thrilled to have this opportunity of walking even more closely together and to continue to learn from one another. We are glad to welcome him as a member of our Episcopal team and to assign him to work among you as your father in God.

We are equally delighted to receive Bishop Malcolm Harding as our co-worker.

He too is a man whose very being is centred around the gospel and whom the Lord has used for the salvation of many. Please honour and look after these two precious brothers and their families.

It is also good to be able to say that these steps we have taken are fully supported by a significant number of other orthodox Anglican provinces. There is no need for any to walk alone or step outside the Anglican family.

And let us remember that one of our main motives behind the unusual decisions we have had to take is the responsibility we have to ensure that the church is unhindered with regard to the mission that Jesus Himself has commanded us to accomplish. This must continue to be your priority in the far north of the Americas. We do indeed cover the very ends of the earth.

Let me also be clear regarding the nature of the division which has led to these out of the ordinary moves. It is a severance resulting from a determined abandoning of the one true historic faith delivered to the saints.

This reality alone makes it clear that it is not schism.

Schism is a sinful parting over secondary issues.

This separation is basic and fundamental and means that we are divided at the most essential point of the Christian faith. The sin here is not one of schism but of false teaching which is not at its root about human sexuality but about the very nature of truth itself.

When we talk about the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ we are not referring to something liquid or amorphous.

Christianity is specific, definable and unchanging. We are not at liberty to deconstruct or rewrite it.

If Jesus was the Son of God yesterday then so He is today and will be forever.

This is about the foundational certainty of our very existence and is not something we can amend to suit our circumstances or personal opinions and preferences.

Holy Scripture which is the source of our creeds is revealed and ageless truth.

It was not written out of human knowledge or wisdom but inspired by the Spirit of God.

Jesus died not to establish and preserve institutional franchises but for our sins so we could come into a right relationship with God our Father and Creator.

Structural norms cannot be equated to the eternal gospel which determines our eternal destiny.

These are sad but significant days. It has been heartbreaking to recognize that we have reached such a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican Communion. What has been perpetrated has indeed torn the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level.

We recognize this tragedy with profound grief and love for all those involved and affected.

We judge no one but cannot and will not deny the eternal truth which has purchased our redemption.

As we prepare once again to celebrate Advent let us look back with gratitude to God for the coming of His Son into this beautiful but troubled world.

And let us look forward with awe and joy to the day of His return and all that that implies.

And may God grant us grace that we might be found faithful both now and at that time.

Your brother in Christ,
Gregory