

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

With Comment from George Egerton

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."

[The partnership in the worldwide Anglican Communion is deeply endangered by failure to comply with the Windsor Report and its follow-up process and clarifications. The defiance of NWM, Ottawa, Montreal and now Niagara will erode if not destroy the Anglican partnership, tear the fabric, as Canada follows TEC is 'walking apart' from the Anglican Communion.]

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 ANiC and the global south Primates consider the decision of NWM, now joined by the other Dioceses above, as going beyond diversity and violating the teachings of Lambeth and traditional, scriptural Christianity. The conscience offerings are not to be trusted as they, like the conscience clause on women's ordination, have a short sunset duration.]

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.

[The issue of same-sex blessings touches on doctrinal matters, as indicated in the St. Michael's Report and is not similar to the issue of Women's ordination. The reality is that worldwide Anglicanism and catholic Christianity does consider the issue of same-sex blessings or marriage as touching on such core doctrines as salvation. Moreover, General Synod qualified its reference to core doctrines as 'credal' and there is no mention in the Creeds of many core doctrines.]

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.

[The Dioceses in the ACC who have themselves defied the Windsor Report and its process, have invited rupture of communion with worldwide Anglican Provinces. The members of the Anglican Network in Canada have indicated their willingness to comply fully with the Windsor Report's requests and remain in full communion with worldwide Anglicanism.]

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 Archbishop of Canterbury has signaled, as reported in the British press, a positive response to the establishment of parallel structures and AEO.]

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.

[Those under the Episcopal leadership of such revisionist Bishops as Michael Ingham do not consider the offering of Shared Episcopal Ministry as providing adequate alternative jurisdiction or any adequate protection. Many of the global south Primates agree with this interpretation.]

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."

[Why is the Windsor Report referred to so selectively and briefly? The violations of the Windsor Report and its follow-up process by the bishop of NWM and his Diocesan Synod and the refusal of the General Synod of the ACC (2007) to comply with the Windsor Report and process are prior to the present cross border Episcopal rescues.]

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.

[The decisions by the ACC and several of its Dioceses are also viewed as inappropriate, unwelcome, and invalid by most worldwide Anglicans. Such unprecedented defiance of the teachings of the worldwide Anglican Communion and its conciliar processes calls for unprecedented admonition and actions to rescue faithful Canadian Anglicans and parishes.]

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.

[Diversity is limited by the guarding of orthodoxy as taught by the consensus fidelium of catholic, scriptural, traditional Christianity -- now abandoned by several Canadian Anglican Synods and Bishops.]

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