



THE *Bishop's Charge*

THE RIGHT REVEREND DAN GIFFORD
NOVEMBER 3, 2022

What a joy to physically gather in the name of Jesus after three years! Synod seems to take on characters: we could call this the reunion synod. It was a deep blessing to worship together in the service yesterday. Together we heard God's word, encouraged one another in songs of praise, prayed the Gospel in our liturgy, and received Jesus by faith with thanksgiving in the communion. Pandemic renews our sense of what a precious gift this is to us.

It's great to be installed in that gathering. It sounds very practical: like I am a kitchen cabinet or a car muffler, so I hoping I'll be useful in my role.

I have experienced a steep learning curve in my time as bishop coadjutor—but it has been a great gift to have Bishop Charlie, who is the “encourager extraordinaire”, mentor me during this time so very wisely and with such amazing gifts for this ministry. It was wonderful to honour Bishop Charlie at the banquet last night. It was a glorious evening that gave a true sense of the great goodness of his ministry and who he is.

We have been incredibly blessed to have a bishop so faithful to the Lord Jesus and His people. Bishop Charlie, you have been a true and loving shepherd who has continually brought God's truth and grace into our lives. There are people across the diocese joining us now on live-stream, so this is a good time for us to express to you what is in our heart: We love you Bishop Charlie. Thank you for being our faithful Bishop!

Way to go, Charlie. Thank you for continuing your ministry among us. We are not letting you leave your ministry with us—we hang on to our bishops, as you'll hear.

One of the great blessings of this new role for me is visiting churches, which I didn't get to do very much as parish minister. Just this fall I visited churches from Bonavista to Vancouver Island. I think there is song in there somewhere; this land is my land. These church families are in very different contexts—small and larger, urban,

rural, low church, high church. But in each context there is gospel ministry of vitality and growth. In just about every place I've visited I have met people who have come into a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus for the first time. Others have shown up who have never come to church, and still others are experience a deep renewal in their life of faith in Jesus. In every church I have visited, there has been a strong commitment to mission. Your churches are seeking ways to bring the Gospel to the world with the particular gifts and setting that God has given to you. I always look forward to these Sundays.

It is amazing because this is happening as we have been coming out of a pandemic with its times of separation and challenges. It has been hard for us as a church, we have pivoted continually, changing to face the next new situation. It brings a weariness to us in the church, in our leaders, but also in the society outside our church. In all of it, God is not surprised! He has much in store for us.

In this situation I bring a bishop's charge. I am not sure why it is called a charge. It's nothing to do with Bishop's credit cards, or a bishop's accusations. It has a sense of exhortation, of calling us forward, like an officer in Horse Cavalry in history saying charge.

The charge I would like to bring is not original, you'll be very happy to know. It is from Paul's letter to the Philippians 1:27-2:4. It is helpful to have this passage in front of you in the next few minutes. As you turn there I want to tell you that on Tuesday we had a clergy day in which David Short from St. John's Vancouver was our Bible teacher. I realised our 24 years of ministry together has influenced us because he chose the exact same Bible readings that I will speak on here. And he basically gave a good portion of my charge yesterday already. My apologies to our clergy because some things are repeated. It is good that my bible teaching is similar because it would have been awkward if I contradicted David—and test our long and happy friendship.

Look at v.27: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." I know for certain this is what God is calling us to, because this is God's living word for us. So that's my charge, the one thing to remember: Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ!

Paul chooses that word only to mean: This is the most important thing—Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ. This is critical for us in ANiC because the one great thing of untold value to the world and to us is the Gospel of Christ. Sadly, this is the Gospel that in many parts of the Christian church, even what have been called evangelical churches, is being diluted, and many are losing their grip on the Gospel. Paul has named the temptation that many Christian fall into: they are ashamed of the Gospel. Paul tells us in ANiC to go the opposite way in Romans 1: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." We cannot know the saving power of God and the world cannot know it, if we are ashamed of the Gospel. It is the treasure that He has entrusted to his church for the sake of the world.

God calls ANiC in this verse and the ones that follow to:

- **Be clear about the Gospel**
- **Have confidence in the Gospel**
- **Take courage in the Gospel**
- **Live in the comfort of the Gospel**

And Paul says, in order to have this Gospel clarity, confidence, courage and comfort we must be united together in that Gospel. It is the precious gift that makes it possible for us (men and women, lay people and ordained) to be gospel ministers to the world. We can never flourish in this work without unity in the Gospel. It is the pervasive theme of this great letter. You see it played out in each of these four C's.

Gospel Clarity

First Gospel clarity:

In this chapter Paul says the Gospel is all about Jesus. You can see in v.27 that it is the Gospel OF CHRIST. Jesus Christ is the good news. He is God's plan to save us. He is the one treasure of surpassing worth that we offer the world and one another. This has always been true for the church of God throughout the ages, and it is true for us. We are stewards of this Gospel which Paul lays out very clearly in 1 Corinthians 15. The clergy heard on Tuesday: It is four "thats":

V.1 That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (In our place, for our forgiveness, to reconcile us to God, and unite us to God forever)

V.2 that he was buried,"

V.3 that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (meaning God has made him Lord and King over us and all creation)

V.4 And that this resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples and many others. (That is why this good news is preached—the apostles have seen, touched and heard the good news IN Jesus which is what they proclaim. And now we offer to the world what these apostles' clearly say about Jesus and in whom we put our trust!)

Gospel Confidence

And so secondly Paul says, have confidence in this gospel. Let your manner of life be worthy of it. Having confidence in the Gospel means letting your manner of life be shaped by that Gospel. In the original, the word translated "manner of life", is the same word for citizen. Paul commands us to live as a citizen of Jesus and his Kingdom!

The people of the city of Philippi would resonate with that word. It was a Roman colony in Greece, so even though far from Rome, they had Roman citizenship with freedom from slavery. This was incredibly valuable and an immense privilege. They had complete confidence in it for their well-being, so they want to live in a way that honours the emperor and brings glory to Rome.

For Paul being a citizen of the Gospel of Jesus means living a life that honours Jesus as our Lord and emperor. It means bringing glory to Jesus in every aspect of your life because you are a citizen, freed by forgiveness of sin to serve him. This is what it means to put your confidence in Jesus.

You can see this very clearly in Paul's greatest of crisis. He is in prison awaiting a trial in which his execution is a real possibility. In that dire situation Paul is confident in the Gospel—living as a citizen of the gospel. Paul says in verses 13 and 14:

"I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so

that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

The world sees his imprisonment as failure. But as a citizen of Jesus’ kingdom, it is eternal success because Jesus is being made known to those most resistant people in the empire. The Gospel of Christ advances. Amazingly ministers are more confident in the Lord because of this crisis. They speak the word of the Gospel much more boldly and fearlessly.

Brothers and sisters, we in ANiC are being called to Gospel confidence. When we see one another live it out in a way worthy of the Gospel of Christ, it is contagious. We build that confidence up in one another as we honour Jesus The Lord, above everything in our lives. There is a boldness and fearlessness in speak of Jesus that grows in us.

Gospel Courage

Now when you honour Jesus as Lord and there is another Lord that the culture follows there will be trouble. The Christians in Philippi were residents in a city with tremendous social pressure to live for the lordship of Caesar—everything organised against faith in Jesus. So they were beginning to suffer for living as though Jesus really is Lord.

Therefore, there was a temptation to go low profile—limit the extent to which Jesus is Lord of your life—not to speak up of the hope in you, not to bring your faith in the Lord Jesus into the social issues of the city, not to contradict the culture that believes they have a good thing going here with Caesar as lord. Do you face this pressure in your church today?? Is there another Lord in the society where your church is, that won’t tolerate Jesus as Lord?

In the face of that temptation Paul calls the Philippians to the third “C”: Gospel Courage. There is a deep togetherness about this courage. It is lived out in v.27 in three ways.

First by standing firm in one spirit. This is about persevering when everything in the world is saying: compromise what the Gospel says to make life easier, back down in your faith in Jesus, keep him to yourself. This courage to persevere can only happen in one Spirit. The work of Jesus makes it possible for Jesus to live within us. We have a common life in the Holy Spirit. The Gospel has created that unity. We stand firm in that Holy Spirit together.

In addition, courage involves striving with one mind for the faith of the Gospel. This is a call to the active mission of the Gospel. The word striving has a root word which our English word “athletic” comes from. It is a call to be very active, vigorous in carrying the Gospel into the world., and to do this with one mind. In other words to together keep on deciding to intentionally reach out with the Gospel.

I am so proud of our ANiC vision that Bishop Charlie has exhorted us in these past 8 years— have you memorised it? **“Building Biblically faithful, Gospel sharing, Anglican churches”**

It is a wonderful vision because it helps us be of one mind in striving for the faith of the gospel.

The five priorities too are so helpful for each of our churches to continually decide to strive:

Bold Witnesses

Biblically Grounded

Loving Children and Families

Planting and Growing Churches

On Mission

In doing this, we make common cause to strive together for faith—faith generated by and focused on the gospel the good news that Jesus is Lord. So, I believe it is important to keep on with this vision.

Now there is pressure from outside the church, and pressure from within the church against standing firm and striving for the Gospel.

In Philippi the outside pressure was a society organised against the Lordship of Jesus.

The church in Philippi feared several kinds of suffering for their faith in the Gospel: being unemployed, cancelled, imprisoned, fined, ridiculed, and rejected.

Might this happen to the church in Canada and New England? In the face of suffering Paul says don't be frightened in anything by your opponents. How can we overcome fear?

Two ways:

First, if you persevere with the clear gospel faith and strive to bring it to the world, v.28 says this is a clear sign to your opponents of their destruction. It shows their opponents they are opposing Jesus who alone can save them from the destruction in judgment—this can give you concern for your enemy! But also it is a sign of your salvation, and that from God this is because you can only persevere and strive for the Gospel if you have a living faith in Jesus.

Secondly, Paul says a rather shocking thing in v.29: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."

He says that Christians have been given a double privilege. He enables us to believe—the great Holy Spirit gift. But the Jesus who we believe in, is a suffering Christ who died on a cross. So, the privilege of believing on Christ is also the privilege of suffering for him.

Paul says that this is normal Christianity, in v. 30! "You go through the same struggle I went through." We might think God is giving up on us in suffering. No, it is part of his grace in the gospel; grace to suffer, as well as believe. To know this is to know Gospel courage in your life.

The great internal pressure against standing firm and striving together is selfishness in the church. Look at chapter 2 v.3 "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit," This will always lead to division, it will always compromise the mission of the church. How are we to contradict this in the church? Paul says in humility count others as better than yourself. This is Gospel courage brothers and sisters: Jesus on cross for you is the

opposite of self-centredness. If this is the ultimate fact in your life we will have the same priority. He will govern our relationships. Do we have the courage to do this?

Gospel Comfort

Now, our struggle against the fear of how the world might cause us to suffer, and against the constant temptation of selfishness, is not easy at all. So, Paul gives a fourth “C”: Gospel comfort. In chapter 2 v.1 it takes the form of rhetorical questions:

“Any encouragement in Christ?” Yes, he gives to us his life—this encourages us to live for him.

“Any comfort from love?” Yes, Christ’s love on cross for us is our great comfort and consolation. In battle we know in his love that we really matter to him. He is working everything together for his good.

“Any participation in the Spirit?” Yes, there is deep fellowship with the Spirit and with other believers. God the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us because we each have been united to Jesus by faith in him and his Gospel. This brings us into a very deep relationship with one another in Jesus.

“Any affection and sympathy?” Yes. We constantly experience the infinite tenderness and compassion of God through the Gospel at the deepest point of our need.

In knowing and practicing this Gospel with each other the Gospel comfort of God strengthens his people to walk in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Paul says there is great joy that comes as we practice this love that God comforts us with.

So how can we as a diocese help one another in unity to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ?

Prayer

Canon Garth Hunt is stepping down after 20 years of ministry in this area, from well before ANiC was formed. His equipping parishes for prayer, His call to prayer, and the diocesan prayer groups is vital for the Gospel ministry of our diocese. I am so thankful to you, Garth. Your ministry has deeply strengthened the Gospel mission of ANiC. I will put a priority on a succession plan for this invaluable ministry.

Catechism

We live in a world that persistently catechizes us, leading us away from Gospel clarity and confidence. Christian Catechism equips the church to have Gospel clarity and Confidence so that we can strive for the Gospel well in the world. The Rev. Ben Roberts will provide leadership for this in our diocese.

Lay Leadership

Striving side by side means the whole church and all the church leaders are striving. It is so much more fruitful when lay and clergy are leading, standing firm in this striving together. We will strongly encourage developing and equipping lay leadership in our churches. We heard one great resource yesterday with Rev. Sean Love and Rev. Guy Bellerby yesterday. Also AMMiC has an 100-person lay leadership training and equipping ministry.

Church Planting

ANiC will develop funding for church plants. It is an effective way of striving for the Gospel. In ANiC we will have a goal of at least one church plant a year.

Multicultural Mission

The world is coming to Canada through immigration. Often they have a great openness to the Gospel. I believe we are called to be a mixed group of races and ages that reflects our neighbourhood, standing firm together and striving for the faith of the Gospel. AMMiC is well positioned to equip and help all our churches in our mission to people of different cultures.

Clergy Care

Led by Canon Brent, it is a priority in our diocese to bring Gospel comfort to one another and to promote renewal and times of rest. Clergy Care will be encouraging further ways and very practical means to meet in small groups of clergy for fellowships of prayer and encouragement, with the purpose helping each other live in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

Ordained Ministry Development

I am thankful to Bishop Stephen and the work of the ordained ministry task force. They have done great work in outlining a plan and process to develop new leaders in ANiC who are faithful to the Gospel. I have appointed Rev. Sean Love to be the Diocesan Ordination Chaplain to oversee this work.

Related to this is the inauguration of a new seminary called Packer College— you will hear more about this from Dr. Gary Graber during synod. Its aim is to train people to become Anglican ministers of Gospel Clarity, Confidence, Courage and Comfort.

I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Bishop Charlie to be chancellor, promoting Packer College and its development. I am also pleased to announce that I have appointed the Rev. Ken Deeks as principal. He brings lots of experience to this role as dean of a seminary in BC.

Episcopal Oversight

As you all know we have moved the election of a suffragan bishop to our next synod in November 2023, the wisdom of this is becoming more and more clear—with tiredness coming out of COVID for our dioceses and possible candidates, and a synod this year with much transition.

Please pray for the process led by the Episcopal Nominating Committee chaired by Executive Archdeacon Paul Charbonneau.

There has been some concern regarding the issue of the ordination of women, since last year's episcopal election. It is important to say that from the beginning of ANiC we have been a diocese that has allowed differing views on women's ordination. ANiC will continue to do this, as Bishop Charlie has written in a pastoral letter to all the clergy of ANiC earlier this year, which I have endorsed. Therefore we will not debate this issue in our synod.

The bishops and archdeacons with clergy will however address pastoral implications of allowing for differing

views. I want this synod to know that I deeply value the Gospel ministry of all men and women clergy in ANiC. Their gifts for ministry and their commitment to serving Jesus and his Gospel are remarkable, and a real strength in our Gospel mission. This has been brought home to me in being with them in our synod and clergy day and I witness it in my parish visits—so encouraging to see. As bishop of ANiC I will support and uphold the gospel ministry of clergy men and women equally, as I have promised to do in the BCP ordinal at my consecration.

Now, let me tell you what the next year will be like for episcopal oversight:

I will remain in the West until August 2023 when our family will move to Southern Ontario. I am putting Charlie to work: right after synod he will take 2 months off when he is not even allowed to glance at his phone and emails. Then he has agreed to be Bishop in Eastern Canada, part-time until August. I am also grateful for Bishop Don who continues his episcopal ministry especially in the Eastern part of Canada.

After I move there will be an interim period from August to, likely, March in the West when the newly elected suffragan bishop is consecrated. To use a sports term, we have a “deep bench”.

I am very glad that Bishop Grant LeMarquand, who is Bishop of the Horn of Africa in retirement, will retire from his role as professor of New Testament and Mission at Trinity School For Ministry and move to Calgary next year. He will provide episcopal ministry to the churches in Alberta, the prairies and BC interior.

Bishop Ron will provide episcopal ministry for Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland of BC.

Bishop Trevor will be on call throughout the West and throughout Canada.

This is not a holding pattern in the ministries of our diocese. We want to move forward with mission in ANiC. We have a real treasure in all our bishops, with their great gifts and experience for mission. Therefore they will have a ministry focus to support mission for all of ANiC:

Bishop Stephen continues his mission work as Bishop of Multicultural Ministry, leading AMMiC in this work. He will also develop ordained and lay leaders, equipping ANiC to welcome immigrants.

Bishop Charlie will be Bishop of Evangelism working with Scott Hunt in the Bold Witnesses priority. This is his passion.

Bishop Ron will be Bishop of Church Planting . He has been very active with the Anglican Explorers initiative to bring together groups in areas without ANiC churches. And he has planted a church himself, that continues to flourish.

Bishop Trevor will be Bishop of Mentoring Clergy and Mediation in parishes. This is a ministry for Bishop Trevor that extends well beyond ANiC and has been international over many years.

Bishop Grant will work with Canon Brian McVitty in international mission.

Bishop Don will continue to support relief work in the Anglican Relief and Development fund, he will continue prayer ministry, and will be episcopal Vicar for the ACNA.

I am so thankful for these faithful bishops who God has wonderfully gifted for gospel ministry. I know God will strengthen the mission work of our diocese through them.

I want to end with thanksgiving.

I am very thankful for John MacDonald, who has retired. Now as Executive Director God has marvellously provided Canon Howard Edwards, who has already done an amazing job. He is a remarkable combination of a man who loves numbers a lot and he loves Gospel ministry even more.

Our staff of Scott Hunt and Susan Reynolds and Howard, and Kajul; there has been a huge amount on their plate with this time of transition and being short-staffed. They have done incredible work.

I close with this charge to our diocese again: Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. This is what we want ANiC to be known for. By the power of the Holy Spirit in all our churches, may we strive side by side for the faith of this Gospel with Gospel Clarity, Gospel Confidence, Gospel Courage and Gospel Comfort.

Let us pray

Heavenly Father, we know that in our weakness and our sin, we are prone to fear and to selfishness. By your mighty power, help us to persevere with the faith of the Gospel, and press forward with the Gospel of Jesus; unified, fearless by your grace. Thank you for the Holy Spirit, by whom we have unity with Jesus and deep fellowship with every believer in ANiC. By his power working in us, may we in the coming year live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ, to the praise and glory of his Name now and forever. Amen.