



Anglican Network in Canada

ANGLICAN NETWORK in CANADA
CHARGE OF THE RIGHT REVEREND DONALD F HARVEY
TO THE FIRST SYNOD BEING HELD
in
BURLINGTON, ONTARIO
NOVEMBER, 2008

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Almost a year ago now in this very setting we held a memorably Spirit-filled couple of days, at the end of which we officially launched the Anglican Network in Canada as an ecclesial body under the jurisdiction of the Province of the Southern Cone. You may recall that at its conclusion I delivered what I called a “Charge to Synod, had this been a Synod”. The fact that it came at the end and not at the beginning (as a Charge by its very nature must) still did not protect me from getting into trouble with a number of individuals from within and without, especially when I announced some tentative appointments of people who at that time officially still were part of the Anglican Church of Canada. While in my zeal and enthusiasm I may have been premature, it is not without significance that all of these pre-announcements have come to pass.

When I convened my last Diocesan Synod in the Anglican Church of Canada, I recall stating what a relief it was to have my last “Charge” out of the way and that now life could return to normal. Little did I (or you) know what exciting plans God had in store for so many of us, and I now, as we launch our first Synod which indeed extends from “sea to sea” find myself composing another such document, but in an atmosphere that this is not just a formality, as it often had become for me, but rather one that I hope will reflect the new Spirit that infuses this great Movement into which we have been called. And as we do so, we are ever aware of the words of encouragement in **Acts 5, verses 40 and 41**.

A Charge to a Synod is somewhat patterned on the Speech from the Throne which usually proceeds a new session of a parliament. It should spend a little time reflecting on the past year, a comment on the present, and by far most of the attention should be placed on our aspirations for the future. As we try and dip into that future, we at all times seek divine guidance in all of our decisions, especially those on which we come with differences of opinion as to what should be done.

If there is any one aspect above all others with which this Church must be identified, it is that of Prayer, both corporate and personal. I fear that historically one of the most vital components of our life together with Him all too often has been given a very second or third place status and becomes one of the first items dropped when we try and streamline an overcrowded agenda. May that never even become a temptation for us.

A few weeks ago I found myself secluded in a hotel room preparing a major address on the authority of Jesus that I was to give at an Awakening Gathering. All I had by way of resources was a notepad and a Bible. Without a concordance, it became necessary for me to pour over St. Matthew's Gospel looking for passages I was sure were there but which seemed determined to elude me. That was not a bad exercise at all, as in so doing I came across many things I was not searching for, and high among them were the references to the many times Jesus himself sought opportunity to go off by himself and pray. This is yet another example over how much the process we are hoping to build, already has been built for us by the example of Our Master.

At another point in our Agenda, the Archdeacon will present a report on our statistics right up to the present moment. This report will be appended to the official copy of this Charge. Suffice it to say that one year ago we started with two of everything – two Bishops, two Priests, two Deacons and two Parishes. What has happened in the intervening twelve months is nothing short of being a miracle and for that we are “unfeignedly thankful” and rejoice that we have been chosen by Him to extend his kingdom in this manner.

The appointment of the Venerable Charlie Masters as National Director and Executive Archdeacon came during the year as did that of the Venerables Trevor Walters and Desiree Stedman as Territorial Archdeacons. Bishop Malcolm Harding very generously agreed to assume these duties for Central Canada until our membership justifies an appointment of a separate Archdeacon for that area. Both Territorial Archdeacons also are my Examining Chaplains as is the Reverend Dr. Archie Pell. Archdeacon Stedman also continues in her role as Personal Assistant to the Moderator.

When planning this Synod we wrestled for some time as to the form it should take. While we recognize that the Synod in many ways is the parliament and main governing of the Church, we also are aware of how disappointed, disillusioned, and frustrated we all have been at Synods we have attended where the Agenda was manipulated and back room politics, in the worse sense of that word prevailed. We want to avoid falling into such a travesty and from the beginning set a standard that will make Synod something much anticipated rather than an annual endurance event.

Last year I shared with you my warm memory of a Synod I attended in the Diocese of the Arctic. I had spent 40 years going to Synods that basically were business meetings with just enough prayer interwoven to make it legitimate to call it a Synod rather than an AGM. To my joy, I found that in the Arctic it was the reverse. The Synod quickly developed into a continuous time of prayer and praise with intervals interspersed to do some business. What really was wonderful was to see how smoothly even contentious business matters were resolved when done in that context. There is a lesson to be learned here.

I think one of our greatest challenges is that most of us are so very newly separated from the Anglican Church of Canada that sub-consciously or unconsciously we still find ourselves thinking within the box that we have been in for most of our adult lives. Because we always saw things done in a certain manner does not mean that is the only way to do them. When parts of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Canada are quoted to us and we are accused of breaking them, we must firmly point out that these no longer apply to us – it is the Constitution of another Province. Let me also say here, that we are not bound by the Constitution of the Southern Cone. We graciously are under the jurisdiction and protection of their Primate on an emergency, temporary, pastoral basis, until our new Province comes

into being. And the joy that comes with that is that we will be active participants in the formation of the Canons and Constitution of the new Province for North America.

After much soul searching we have decided that the format of this Synod will not be what we previously thought it was going to be. There was a strong desire to get as much of Constitution in place as time would permit. This will not be the case. The things that must be agreed upon to make us a viable corporation do have to be voted upon and passed. All other constitutional aspects will be presented to you in detail at this Synod and any queries you may have will be answered or recorded for a longer answer after prorogue
All of these then will be sent to your parishes for discussion and adoption (or otherwise) before they are voted upon at our next gathering.

There are several reasons for using this method:

1. Not everyone finds constitutional debate exciting or stimulating, and were we to do this in the more traditional manner at our initial Synod, the list would be so long there would be little time for anything else. This we felt was not in any of our best interests – or our desires.
2. We simply did not have time to get the material to your parishes prior to your coming here to debate it.
3. Most importantly, the parishes must have some ownership of and inclusion in the process of composing a Constitution.
4. Our newly emerging Province also is undertaking such an exercise, and although we will have our diocesan autonomy, we must try and be consistent with their overall principles as well.

However, before leaving this topic I would be very remiss if I did not pay tribute to the immense amount of work that Prolocutor George Sinclair and his Committee put into preparing the documents you will be receiving at this Synod. Nor is their work close to being finished as I would hope that the observations reached at a parish level will be coordinated and brought into some form of order when the documents reach the floor of Synod to be voted upon.

There is one aspect though that cannot be put aside and yet one for which we are not yet ready to put a permanent policy in place. That involves the selection of bishops to lead our Church as it evolves into a more formal entity.

When you hear our statistics, you will note that the only category that has not grown is our House of Bishops. There were two of us last year, and there still are the same two today. I am sure that I am speaking for Bishop Malcolm as I am for myself, when I state without any hesitation that we deem it a joy and an honour to have been able to fit into this role, albeit later in life for both of us, that we have enjoyed filling so immensely. Let me say in my own case, that it seems to me that the over 40 years of ordained ministry that went before it, were simply a preparation for “such a time” and that I have never been happier, despite the frequent stress and frustration that at times occurs when performing a ministry that has been entrusted to me.

But both of us have a shelf life and I am only too aware that “best before” date is approaching and that neither us want to wait until it is obvious to everyone that our “expiry date” has passed. Nor do we want to have to rely on being replaced by others like ourselves who are prepared to come out of retirement.

The Anglican Network in Canada needs to set up a process to select bishops from its own ranks who will be well prepared to catch the torch when we pass it to them. We already know that there are a number of such persons who are quite capable of doing this almost immediately.

Our major problem lies in that we have not had sufficient time to prepare for such a process on a permanent basis. This is further complicated that unlike the Orders of Deacon and Priest, the Episcopacy does come under Provincial guidelines and regulations. Although we expect a new Province soon, it will not have regulations in place for this sort of thing nearly quickly enough for our needs.

What I now am going to present to you, I have discussed with Archbishop Venables and it has his approval.

When you get this Charge in written form you will see that my next sentence, like this one, is printed in bold and is underlined – because it is the key on which all the rest of the proposal is built.

What we propose here is a one time only method in order to facilitate us to move ahead. In due course it will be replaced with something more formal.

The proposal is that you put the recommendation for three new bishops for the Anglican Network in Canada in the hands of your ANiC House of Bishops (Bishop Malcolm and me). We will accept this responsibility with the utmost humility and will spend as much time in prayer and discernment as so great a task requires. We when both agree on three names and get the confidential consent of those we select, these names will be sent to Archbishop Venables. He, after consulting with the House of Bishops of the Southern Cone will adopt our nominees and he will announce their appointment. Their consecrations will be conducted by him in Canada and they will receive his specific endorsement which will make them part of his House of Bishops. Being a member of such a House is the requirement for inclusion as a bishop in the world-wide Communion.

I am now asking the Chancellor and Committee on Constitutions and Canons to prepare a resolution to be distributed tomorrow and to be voted upon on Saturday morning. Now, if this resolution passes, and the responsibility falls to our ANiC House of Bishops, Bishop Malcolm and I would like input from this Synod **as one of the factors we would employ in the heavy task given to us.**

Each voting delegate to Synod would be given a blank piece of paper and a privacy envelope. You will be requested to put the name of a priest whom you would feel would be an appropriate and desirable person to become a Bishop in the Church of God. Seal that in your envelope and give it to a person assigned to receive them. They will be opened by Bishop Malcolm and me when we meet in private in the New Year. **No one but us** ever will now the results. This little survey will be just one of many elements we will bring into our discernment process, but learning your thoughts will be very helpful.

Dear members of Synod, if you accept this process as a one time effort to fill a very important gap, it will involve an immense amount of trust and confidence on your part. In all humility, may I hope that such trust would be justified.

Getting back to what I said earlier about the difficulty of thinking outside of the box, do remember that the North American method for electing bishops is by no means the only method used through our Communion and I suggest that much future study needs to be put into this before we move to the selecting our second round of bishops.

There is one other item that I want to raise in what already has become a longer Charge than I intended it to be. That involves our Unity in Christ.

It is obvious that while we are bound together by very strong ties indeed, the fact that we have travelled side by side so far again is nothing short of Divine Guidance - step by step. Geographically, we span a whole continent. Many of us come from a variety of distinctive cultures and most certainly there are vast liturgical differences among us even at this Synod. Each one of our 23 parishes has a background that in some way makes it distinctive and one hopes that always will be the case.

One of the Devil's most successful ploys is to have Followers of The Way fall out and disagree among themselves. It is rampant in the Book of Acts, even among the Apostles, and it is always a pressing danger - especially when he realizes that a Movement such as ours can do him much harm. All of us, I am sure, have felt very depressing times when we have been under attack, even at the heights of our exuberance.

In that knowledge, I am calling upon all of you, and the parishes you represent, to become involved in frequent prayer for our unity during these turbulent times when the way forward is not always as clear as we would like for it to be.

I take much comfort in Colossians Chapter 3, verses 12 – 17

Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another, and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word and deed, do everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through HIM.

So, I believe we are well on the road to "First things first". We are not afraid of what may lie ahead, but we are at times overwhelmed by the enormity of the task given us. It is neither a common one nor is it without perils from within and without. But we are assured that the goal is attainable and in the end it makes the sacrifices, even when it comes to the loss of property, very small indeed when compared to the rewards.

We are called to labour in an age that because of its paradoxes is very unique in the annals of history. Just a century ago, General William Booth, the great founder of the Salvation Army prophesied

I am of the opinion that the chief dangers that confront the coming century will be Religion without the Holy Spirit; Christianity without Christ; Forgiveness without

Repentance; Salvation without Regeneration; Politics without God; and Heaven without Hell.

This teaching has crept into mainline Christianity, in whole or in part, to an extraordinary degree. That it is so readily accepted by our society today requires that we must be well armed and girded by God's Holy Word to confront it. May we never be found wanting and having put our hand to the plow, let us never turn back.

Of all the moments I have experienced during the four years that I have been active in this ministry, none moved me more than just a few weeks ago in Virginia. One of our speakers was the Archbishop of Uganda, Henry Orombi. He was eating breakfast at table when I approached him to bid him welcome to North America, and express the wish that some day I even might welcome him to Canada. As I approached the good man rose from his breakfast to greet me. When I urged him please to sit down and not interrupt his meal, he looked intently at me and said, "My brother, in my country it always is our custom to stand in the presence of a warrior". Whether I deserved it or not, I was deeply, deeply moved by this tribute from a man who himself had endured the battles in his own country and abroad more than most of us can imagine.

Now, my brothers and sisters, as I invoke God's Holy Spirit on this Synod, I want to share with you that same tribute that so recently and movingly was paid to me. It is an honour and privilege to stand in your presence – my fellow warriors in the Gospel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name "Donald" in a cursive script.