



The Charge of Bishop Charlie Masters

Diocesan Bishop

Anglican Network in Canada

9th Annual Synod – October 26-28, 2016

Theme: *Praying for an open door for the gospel (Colossians 4:2-4)*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; Bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greetings!

My dear bishops, clergy and people of this wonderful Diocese of the Anglican Network in Canada and guests, it is my joy once again – for a second year in a row – to warmly welcome you to Vancouver. As I welcome you, I am well aware that most of us have already been enjoying worship, wonderful teaching, and fellowship for the last day or two but, nevertheless, as part of my charge, I want to formally welcome now to the Anglican Network Church of the Good Shepherd and to our Synod.

In many ways, this is the Synod that was not supposed to happen! If you were here at Synod last year or if you read my charge, you might know what I mean. Because of the huge financial commitment that is required to have a Synod – not only on the part of the Diocese but much more the huge financial burden for each individual parish – I suggested last year that we might like to alternate years (which is possible in the canons), having an electronic Synod one year and the next gathering face-to-face as we are here today. That would save thousands of dollars and it was my thought, at the time, that perhaps 2016 would be an electronic Synod. Then in 2017 – which will be the 10th anniversary of our Diocese as well as the 150th anniversary of Canada – we would have a face-to-face Synod in Ottawa – which is what we intend to do.

During Synod last year I believe it is accurate to say that the Lord poured out his Spirit in a wonderful way such that we had a manifest experience of the goodness and kindness of the Lord. Many of us, perhaps most of us, observed that so that when it came time to discuss having only an electronic Synod this year there was an overwhelming sense that we ought to meet together face-to-face this year. It was even suggested that, for those who've never been to and ANiC Synod before, that it might be of great significance that we gather in 2016.

Believing this was truly a word from the Lord, I therefore made the simple decision to say we would have another face-to-face Synod this year and I asked Bishop Stephen Leung and the incredibly hospitable people of Good Shepherd whether they would be willing, once again, to host us as they had so wonderfully in 2015. I want to thank Bishop Stephen and all the people of Good Shepherd for your hospitality and say that we feel absolutely blessed to be in your church home and enjoy the benefits of the generosity of those who made it possible to

purchase and renovate this wonderful building, making it such a serviceable place of worship, fellowship and ministry. Truly the Lord dwells in this place. Bless you and thank you!

Ever since the decision was made to hold this Synod, there has been a growing sense of the importance – in fact the absolute necessity – that we meet. So today, as I speak to you in this charge, I can say I have absolute confidence that it is the right thing that we are gathered here. I know and I am deeply grateful for the financial sacrifice and generosity which is made it possible for us to meet. I thank all of you who have traveled here and I'm grateful for your parishes and your people at home who have made it possible for you to be here to represent each congregation.

I also know that finances are still an issue and we have not successfully eliminated this barrier to attending Synod. We have received generous donations for bursaries – more than ever before – and so there are many here because they have received help and I'm grateful. But I also know that there are some who are probably watching us by livestreaming right now who would like to have been present. We miss you very much and regret that finances may have been part of the reason you couldn't come.

Friends who are leading us in teaching at this Synod

As we gather, we are so grateful that we have a number of important friends who have joined us for our Synod and are contributing so significantly to our life by their presence and teaching.

It has been our great joy to have our Primate, **Archbishop Foley Beach**, with us for the first two days of our time here in Vancouver. We are so thankful for his leadership and teaching on our Clergy Day. We are so grateful that he was able to preach at the opening service of our Synod last night. Archbishop Foley loves Canada and ANiC. Many of us will remember with great joy his prayer for our nation on the steps of Parliament Hill in Ottawa two years ago. He and his wife Allison serve us so well and he leads us in a godly fashion. To have him with us and to share with us has been so significant as we have begun our time together here in Vancouver.

In a few moments I will be speaking about the theme of this Synod which comes from Colossians 4. I am so grateful that we have a Bible teacher and Bishop of such stature as our friend **Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali**. He will open the Word for us four times, covering the entire letter of Paul to the Colossians. Good Bible teaching and application has been an important goal of our Synods right from the beginning and so I am thrilled Bishop Michael is our Bible teacher. You'll find display copies of some of his books with ordering information at the back.

Thursday evening at our banquet, Bishop Bill Atwood will be our speaker. He will focus on what God is doing in and through Anglicanism around the world. I don't believe there is anyone who could better address this subject, including even the Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Atwood is the Bishop of ACNA's International Diocese and is also our Provincial Dean for International Affairs. He has, for at least 20 years, traveled the world – especially throughout the Global South – at great personal and family sacrifice and expense to serve us all. It was a thrill to read – and I'm sure we'll hear lots about it from Bishop Bill tonight – that the recent meeting of the Global South was such an encouragement to him and therefore surely will be to us.

Canon Phil Ashey and Canon Steven Saul come to us on behalf of the American Anglican Council (AAC). Both have immense experience in the ups and downs of Anglican parish life and are able to counsel and encourage parishes which may feel they're spinning their wheels a bit and are in danger of becoming discouraged. My experience is that virtually every parish goes through these times, from the smallest to the largest. And so I'm grateful for their leadership in our Workshop Day which addressed the matter of church revitalization. We are believing God for much fruit from that workshop which they have so wonderfully given.

There are, of course, other guest bishops, and friends, all of whom it is my delight to welcome to our Synod. It is my hope to introduce folk later as our time unfolds and hopefully some can also bring greetings to us all.

Theme of Synod: PRAYING FOR AN OPEN DOOR FOR THE GOSPEL

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison – that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.
(Colossians 4:2-4)

One of the great joys and responsibilities of being the Diocesan is the need and responsibility to identify and choose the theme and theme passage for each Diocesan Synod. I inherited this tradition from Bishop Don, who every time, in my view, chose exactly the right passage and theme for each successive Diocesan Synod.

When the lot fell to me to do the same, I certainly felt the pressure and responsibility to prayerfully come up with something which I believe is from the Lord. What I find the most difficult is the need to choose the theme and passage months before Synod.

So it was that I chose the theme of: Praying for an open door for the gospel, months ago based on Colossians chapter 4:2-4. I felt good about it right from the start but as the Synod approached, there's been a growing sense of excitement and conviction in my heart that, in fact, this is exactly the right theme and word for us at this time. When I chose this theme, I had no idea of what was coming and of the events and developments we would be facing today but now, from this vantage point, I can see that the Lord truly did lead and that at this time it is important for us to consider this theme.

At this point there are three things that I'd like us to consider:

1. Praying,
2. An open door, and
3. For the gospel.

1. Praying

In verse 2, Paul exhorts the Colossian church "*to continue steadfastly in prayer*" and later in verse 3 says: "*pray also for us*". Now I am neither particularly smart nor deep, but I get it that the apostle Paul considers prayer to be of great importance in the purposes of God. I also am aware this does not come as a surprise to you. But having said that, it is quite possible many of us feel a deep sense of disappointment and burden for the poverty of our prayer lives. We may

sense that, perhaps, our activities, which have not been bathed in prayer, may diminish the fruitfulness of our lives and ministry.

I myself come from a family of prayer. My parents prayed constantly for us, and we were aware as the years unfolded that we, in many ways, were riding the crest of their prayer lives which went before us and paved a godly way for our every pursuit. Later in my ministry years, I knew that my ministry and the ministry of the congregation I served were deeply affected by the prayers of my parents – and all those who prayed as they did.

Later, when my parents went to be with the Lord, I worried that their passing would leave a great gap of intercessory prayer. I can see now that the Lord raised up, particularly in our family, my sisters who carry this same mantle of prayer. I am so grateful but I also have in my heart the longing myself to go deeper in prayer and for the churches that I represent to go deeper in prayer as well.

Right now, right in the middle of this charge, I'm going to stop for a moment and invite us all to invite God the Holy Spirit to pour out a spirit of prayerfulness so that we will not just be talking about continuing steadfastly in prayer but that, in fact, we will *be* a truly prayerful people. Prayer will be an obvious mark of our lives – individually and corporately. A mark clearly evident by the way we order our lives.

Prayer

Years ago I memorized Hebrews 11:6. At the time I was memorizing in the King James Version and that's what I'll quote now: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* It seems incredible to me now but I don't ever remember thinking particularly about the fact that to *"diligently seek him"* is in fact in prayer – prayer with a heart that believes and trusts not only that God really does live but that he is also very responsive to the prayers of his people. Seeking him in prayer is not wasted time for God himself rewards it.

So what I am asking of you as church leaders is that you pray – that we pray – for God to give you and us an adjustment of life whereby prayer, in the context of thanksgiving to God, is seen to be the central pattern and focus of your parish and individual lives. This does not happen haphazardly so we are asking the Holy Spirit to do it. Clearly such a transformation of life requires of us a plan of action. I am not aware of any important thing in life that doesn't require a measure of planning and discipline, otherwise just the urgencies and busyness of life squeezes it out.

I'm very grateful that my Canon for Prayer Support, The Rev Canon **Garth Hunt**, has sent out an invitation for each congregation to identify a person who would be a Prayer Coordinator. We have much to learn from one another and we want to encourage and exhort one another in prayer. For instance I'm aware of one parish that as of Christ the King Sunday will be completing a year of prayer, ending with a season of fasting and prayer. It would be wonderful for representatives from all the other parishes of the diocese to have the opportunity to hear more so that we can learn from their example. I'm aware of a parish that, long before it moved into a new area and building, held prayer walks – and parishioners continue to have prayer walks and believe that they now are seeing fruitfulness as a result of this simple pattern of

prayer life together. I'm aware of another region where clergy and people have felt moved to pray specifically for revival in these days, for a fresh anointing and touch and move of the Holy Spirit such as we've never experienced before. There is a manifest desperation in the prayer that I've observed which is of God and is exactly the place that he would love to work. In a sense God has backed us into a corner and we have no other option but to pray for revival.

We need to plan. You need a plan. And you need the encouragement of others. It is the clear teaching of Scripture that prayer is the key to the purposes of God: *"continue steadfastly in prayer and pray with thanksgiving"*.

Speaking of thanksgiving, I would encourage folk to think about memorizing Psalm 100 – which is known as the Jubilate Deo – and also what is known as the general Thanksgiving in Morning Prayer. In the Daily Offices, we have a rich heritage which serves the purposes of God in our prayer life.

Lest I have just dropped another burden on your shoulders, these are not a bunch of instructions to be attempted in our own strength, as a dear friend recently texted me, but rather they are to flow from the fact that we are *"in Christ"* which is clearly the understanding of all the teaching of the Pauline epistles, including Colossians.

The great John Stott, in his book *The Message of Romans* (pg. 187), says: "We should constantly be reminding ourselves who we are. We need to learn to talk to ourselves, and ask ourselves questions: *"Don't you know? Don't you know the meaning of your conversion and baptism? Don't you know that you have been united to Christ and his death and resurrection?... Don't you know these things? Don't you know who you are?"* We must go on, pressing ourselves with such questions until we can answer: "Yes, I do know who I am: A new person in Christ. And by the grace of God I shall live accordingly!"

Living accordingly by the grace of God because we are new persons in Christ makes prayerfulness a reality even in relatively lazy and undisciplined people such as me.

2. An Open Door

The apostle Paul evidently knew the difference between open doors and closed doors. With that discernment it would appear he also learned not to attempt to go through closed doors; but when God opens a door, you go through it immediately and boldly.

When Paul and Barnabas returned home to Antioch having been commissioned in Acts 13 to go on what we now call Paul's first missionary journey, they reported to the assembled church as is quoted in Acts 14:27: *"And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles."*

Later, as is recorded in Acts 16, Paul and Silas and others took seriously what they discerned to be closed doors from the Lord until finally they perceived that the Lord had opened another door which they went through immediately.

"And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galacia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted

to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying "come over to Macedonia and help us". And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." (Acts 16:6-10)

But Luke does not tell us *how* Paul and his company discerned when there was a closed door and when it was a door that was open. What is clear is that there was a very clear distinction. Paul understood you don't try to force doors God has closed but you quickly go through those He opens.

Continuing this theme, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 16 says: *"but I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, And there are many adversaries."* (1 Corinthians 16:8, 9)

The last phrase of this portion of scripture makes it clear that going through an open door does not necessarily mean that everything is smooth sailing. There are adversaries. There are setbacks even when we are exactly where we're supposed to be and the door is flung wide open by God. When Paul and Barnabas reported that an open door had been given for the gospel to the Gentiles, it sounds so wonderful but when you read the account of that ministry in Acts 13 and 14, you discover that, in fact, at one point Paul was stoned and left for dead.

That suggests an open door assures us we will bear fruit in the way God intends, but it doesn't give us the assurance of comfort and ease and no setbacks or frustrations.

Surely part of the praying for the revitalization of our parishes is discerning which doors are closed and which are open.

I believe we need to pray for an acute sense of the leading of the Lord so that when he does open the door, such as he obviously did for Paul at Troas, we are able to obey it immediately and boldly go through so that he can do the work that he wants to do in the Gospel.

Our stated task as a diocese is *Building biblically faithful gospel sharing Anglican churches* and we are part of a province which is about *Reaching North America with the transforming love of Jesus Christ*. The task before us is immense. We cannot afford to bang our heads against closed doors or miss or neglect going through open ones.

It would seem clear that when we are in prayer we're in the place where God can give us discernment and lead us so that we can have an economy of motion and we can discern *"what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"*. (Romans 12:2)

3. The Gospel

It is very clear that Paul is not concerning himself with success in a worldly sense but is only interested in the promotion and the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's the gospel the world needs, not us or our plans or best efforts. In 2 Corinthians Paul said: *"For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake."* (2 Corinthians 4:5) It's the gospel, and only the gospel, that is *"the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."* (Romans 1:16). And it is the gospel that Paul speaks

about at the beginning of Colossians 1 which is bearing fruit around the world. He says: *"We always thank God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which is come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing- as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth."* (Colossians 1:3-6).

When we consider North America, we need to realize that what North Americans need is not the best possible expression of Anglicanism, but the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul makes it clear that his concern is that he, and we, accurately communicates the gospel because it is only the gospel that saves. So he exhorts us to pray: *"that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ"* and later *"that I may make it clear which is how I ought to speak."*

Dear friends, we need to be steeped in the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and filled with the joy that comes from knowing we have been saved in him and that *"he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* (Colossians 1:13,14)

And we need to pray for an open door to communicate this message in such a way that typical, average, ordinary, broken Canadians and Americans, from the youngest to the oldest, can receive this salvation that comes only in the Name of Jesus.

This is the plan. There is nothing else that we have to offer. But we also know how frustrating seeking to proclaim this message can be. We need to pray and we need to ask God for discernment to perceive the open doors which only he can provide.

To the Church of Philadelphia, as recorded in Revelation 3, Jesus writes: *"I know you're works. Behold, I've sent before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name."*

This is for us, dear friends. The Diocese of the Anglican Network in Canada is of little significance – numerically or financially or by influence. We have little hope of making a difference unless we choose to honour the Word of God and lift up the Name of Jesus. When we do that, he is pleased to open the door which no one, absolutely no one, can shut.

Again, Paul knew this reality, as recorded in Acts 18 at Corinth: *"And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in the city who are my people."* (Acts 18:9,10) Clearly the Lord was assuring him of an open door because God had many already he knew he wanted to call to himself through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus.

Dear friends as I have prayed about this Synod, about our Diocese and about this passage, I have become more and more convinced that we must pray for an open door for the gospel. We just don't have the ability but he does; and in the gospel we have what everyone needs. If there

is a reason for our existence, as I believe there is, it is to be vehicles through which gospel ministry and church planting is available to any and all – and is provided in an Anglican setting.

I believe the five priorities are all about providing a platform for life and ministry through which the word of God is honoured and obeyed, and the name of Jesus and the gospel of Jesus are lifted up. As we work on these priorities we are preparing for an open door for the gospel and ready ourselves to go through as those doors are opened and reap the harvest which he will most certainly bring.

Thanksgiving for growth in the 5 Priorities

It is very interesting how much emphasis the Bible puts on thanksgiving. So, as we have already observed in our theme passage when Paul exhorts the church to "*continue steadfastly in prayer,*" he adds: "*being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*"

Accordingly, at least 90% of all that I will report to you now in this charge is in the context of thanksgiving to God for all that he is doing. To him be the glory! "*Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!*" (Psalm 115:1)

Last year, in my charge, I attempted to make it clear that if the five priorities were to become truly a transformational reality in every ANiC congregation the focus had to be entirely on the congregations. It is there that the work of the gospel is truly done and it is there that the evidence of growth in these priorities will be seen or not seen. Clearly, if there is no evidence of change in our common life as congregations with regards to these five then this whole focus will have been a failure.

But I am here today to report that, as I travel and as my fellow bishops travel and most recently by a survey which was done of which 50% of the congregations worked very hard at reporting on the development in their life as congregations that it is very evident that in every congregation there is growth and in many cases at least three of the priorities in these days.

It is now over two years since I raised the call for us to be all about:

1. Bold witnesses
2. Biblically grounded
3. Loving children in the kingdom
4. On mission, and finally
5. Planting and growing churches.

Many of us have been praying every day for the last over two years that these five priorities would become a transformational reality in every ANiC congregation. This *is* praying for an open door for the gospel.

I say praise the Lord and thank you to all the clergy and people of the diocese for so wholeheartedly embracing these five so that they are profoundly affecting the DNA of our diocese. My prayer is that these rather ordinary, but solid, principles of Biblical Christian living will always and everywhere mark our life. I see these five as the way to be expectantly and preparedly praying and watching for an open door for the gospel. And, thanks be to God, we're beginning to see the evidence of the fruit from that open door.

I'm very thankful and give praise to God for those who have given leadership in these five priorities. There are diocesan committees which seek to provide encouragement and resources to churches pursuing these priorities. The ANiC website has pages devoted to each priority with what we hope will be a growing collection of resources, stories and testimonies. Over the course of this Synod, we will hear testimony from each of these five priorities which I believe will encourage us all. Then on Friday morning, a major part of our business will be reflecting together and learning from one another on the five priorities.

I thank God for **Joan Deeks** who accepted my invitation to become ANiC Director, Strategic Ministry Planning. Joan is incredibly gifted. She is very gracious in all dealings with people but also very good at helping us think clearly and holds us to account. She is working very closely with me to develop these five priorities and is giving direction to the five chairs of the five diocesan committees. Joan also as a member of ANiC council is helping us work on being more strategic in our leadership as a Council. I thank God for Joan.

Having mentioned our **ANiC Council**, I thank God for the way we as a Council have worked very hard at being strategic and making sure that these priorities reflect the work which we do and even the ordering of our budget and finances so that we are actually providing the means and resources to do what we are called to do.

I thank God for the Reverend **Ray David Glenn** and for the work which is being done to help us become Bold Witnesses – everyone of us. He and I are working on a four-part series of videos on how to communicate the gospel in a simple and winsome way. It's our prayer that every person in ANiC will have personally responded to the gospel; and that each of us knows how to and *is* sharing our own story of Christ's work in our life, as well as sharing the gospel with the people around us and even inviting others to respond to Christ.

I thank God for Canon **George Sinclair** and his leadership team who are helping us become **Biblically Grounded**, truly framing our lives and ministries in and from the Bible. This team planned and presented a wonderful conference last June entitled "**God's Word Written**". I'm happy to say that all the talks were outstanding and helped deepen our confidence in the Bible as well as taught us how to better present and preach God's Word. You can listen to all the talks online – and I heartily encouraged you to do so. I also know that the team is working on a second conference to be held in 2017.

It is so easy to become unclear and fuzzy about what the gospel is and what the gospel is not. Ways of thinking and living which undermined the gospel grow unbidden in our lives and in our churches. There are ancient and modern challenges to the gospel. Our next conference will be two days long and will focus on growing an even deeper clarity about what the gospel is – "gospel fluency" – in our preaching, teaching and evangelism. Please plan to attend this important event with me. Please make plans in your church budget to send at least your rector. We hope to have details before Christmas but the conference will either be in the Vancouver or Toronto area.

In this context, I trust each one of you has viewed the amazing **Israel Video Project** series produced onsite in Israel by the Rev **Jess Cantelon** earlier this year. These offer tremendous insight and Bible teaching and are available on our website.

I thank God for the Rev **Jeremy and Kimberley Graham** who, along with a wonderful team, are giving leadership to help us think about **Loving Children into the Kingdom**. They have a three-fold vision of helping families, helping congregations, and helping reach children in our communities. They are interacting and coaching a number of individual congregations already, and it's a source of great joy to see the work of children's ministry developing across the country. I know, for instance, that **Saint Matthews Abbotsford** has developed a wonderful children's curriculum that covers the whole of the Bible – and is making it freely available on the church website. I commend it to you. I also know that Dr **Valerie Yui** who is on staff with Bishop Stephen at AMMIC is assisting small churches in children's programs and Vacation Bible School ministries. Valerie has incredible experience and is highly gifted, particularly in evangelism with children – which is what we long for so much.

I also thank God for the **Bishop Donald and Trudy Harvey Legacy Fund** which is available to assist in children and youth ministry. We continue to invite applications and anticipate being able, very soon, to disperse around \$14,000 to facilitate some of these exciting ministries to children and youth. In fact, we are raising addition funds here at Synod through the sale of very special Christmas cards.

I thank God for the work of the **On Mission** team all of whom are actively involved in local and global missions and are passionate to encourage others to do the same. Up until the middle of 2016 **Claus Lenk** spearheaded this priority and I thank God for his passionate leadership during the first two years. Now the Rev **Barclay Mayo** has taken over and this team continues to be very active in facilitating and stimulating each congregation to see itself as On Mission with Christ, reaching out to a community and a world in need of His love. I thank God for Barclay and his team and for what God is doing in parishes across the country. I anticipate that Barclay will begin traveling across the diocese and I encourage your congregation to make use of him and of this amazing group. Please visit our On Mission display tables showcasing Cuba, ARDFC, and a number of other wonderful ministries.

I thank God for the Rev **Alastair Sterne** who has been quietly, but very purposely, working alongside C2C, the **church planting** group we introduced to Synod last year. And now he is also our representative on the Provincial church planting work called "Always Forward". Alastair and his team are working with individual congregations and people on church planting and also referring people to the C2C assessment process. Our goal is to establish congregations, slowly but surely, using the C2C ten best practices which we believe will result in church plants which, under God, have the best hope of not just surviving but becoming a force for the gospel in their communities - but always with the understanding that "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Beyond the five priorities, but certainly very much related, is the whole use of the **provincial catechism** which is called: *To Be a Christian: An Anglican Catechism*. What an incredible resource this catechism has become in congregations across the diocese – and, of course, the whole province. We are so thankful that the Rev Dr J I Packer and Bronwyn Short were so involved in the framing of this great work. The Rev Ben Roberts continues on that provincial group which gives leadership both to the final drafting of the catechism and to implementing its best use not just in the province but around the world. And here in ANiC, under the Ben's

and Bronwyn's leadership, we have what we call the **Canadian Council of Catechists** who are working to provide the resources and training needed to make the catechism even more accessible and useful to all age groups including children. I think God for the clarity in understanding that is resulting as people study and discuss the catechism. It is so good that every question has a whole list of passages of Scripture so, as people study the catechism, they are brought every time to God's Word. This is teaching us to become Bold Witnesses, Biblically Grounded and Loving Children into the Kingdom.

I thank God for the catechism and for all the work going on behind the scenes to provide resources, but even more importantly for all the work happening in every congregation that is using this incredibly important resource.

What a joy it is now to see evidence of the development of growth in these five areas of our life together in Christ.

As I thank God for these developments, I want to **thank you** for being so responsive and entering in so wholeheartedly. I ask you not to stop now but to continue to go deeper in each of these areas; to make plans and to seek to implement them in real ways whereby your life – our life as a diocese – will be transformed congregation by congregation. I believe the words of Paul to that young church in Thessalonica fit very well. He said: *"Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you were doing, that you do so more and more."* (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

And again, Paul's words at the end of that great chapter on the resurrection, that we will all remember very clearly is Dr. Packer preached on it at our final service last send it right here, Paul said: "therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that and the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Thanksgiving for two books written by leaders of ANiC

This past spring, **Bishop Trevor Walters' book** *EAS Syndrome, Healing Burnout in Adults Lacking Parental Affirmation* was released. I first want to congratulate my fellow bishop for this very significant work which comes out of personal experience as well as his years as a pastor, bishop and therapist. I thank God for this book and for the ministry which is coming out of it in so many places across our Province. We must pray for Bishop Trevor in this ministry. I commend his book to you and I thank God for it.

Just about a month ago, a stunning book entitled *Deliver Us from Evil* was released. The author is **Archdeacon Ron Corcoran** and this is his third book. It is, however, like no other book I have ever read. It is the *remarkable True Story of a Child's Abuse, Spiritual Deception, Deliverance and Ultimate Redemption*. Bishop Trevor Walters writes, *"Ron's childhood was unremitting evil. It is compelling reading... It is miraculous that someone could come through so much adversity and yet be able to have had a successful ministry... I could not put the book down. This is epic and needs to be read by everyone; it is shocking and remarkable. God has redeemed his life."* Another reviewer says, the *"...memoir is not a woeful lament but a celebration of redemption, composed thoughtfully and showing a profound sense of gratitude."*

I thank God that Archdeacon Ron had the courage to write this story of redemption and new life in Jesus. I believe it has already been a catalyst for many to receive the healing they need in Jesus. I anticipate there will be many ANiC congregations, and others, who will want to invite Archdeacon Ron and a small team with him, who are calling themselves WOUNDED HEALERS, to minister to individual congregations or groups of congregations, drawing on the experience of healing and redemption Archdeacon Ron writes of so wonderfully in this book.

Both authors are here at this Synod. And I encourage you to speak with them, purchase their books. I'm sure they would be happy to even sign your copy. I do commend these books to you and the ministries which flow from them. And I thank God for what he's doing in these days.

Thanksgiving for the birthdays of two of our godly heroes

We don't very often stop to celebrate birthdays in our diocesan family but this past summer two of the much loved heroes of our movement celebrated significant milestones.

Bishop Malcolm Harding, one of our two founding bishops, celebrated his 80th birthday and the **Rev Canon Dr J I Packer** celebrated his 90th. We give thanks to God for these two men, for sustaining them in these days, and for their ongoing ministries. What a joy it was last Synod to have Dr Packer as our preacher in the final service, expositing 1 Corinthians 15:58. We will never have a more stirring and powerful exhortation to continue in the Gospel than we had on that day. We thank God for these men and their families, and we pray for God's continued blessing on them.

Thanksgiving for growth in our Clergy Care

Mindful of how demanding ministry is in these days, and of the potential sense of isolation and discouragement that can easily come to clergy and their families, and of the significance of this to the overall life of our congregations and diocese, we have given a special focus to clergy care for the last few years. On clergy day, just two days ago, our own Primate spent the day helping equip us as clergy to walk in a way that is healthy, not only for ourselves but for our families and ultimately for ministries and our congregations.

Under the leadership of the Rev Canon **Brent Stiller** who is our Canon for Clergy Support, we are trying to provide policies and resources for congregations on everything from clergy salaries, to holidays, to ways of supporting the health and well-being of their clergy.

More than that, last February, the Rev Dr **Scott Thomas** of C2C, who is himself the author of a book called *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God*, led ANiC bishops and archdeacons in a training session so we can be more effective coaches of our clergy. As a result of that extremely significant couple of days, it is now our goal that every clergyperson in ANiC would be coached by someone and, in turn, would coach one or two other clergy. This is an extremely important development which will go a long way toward providing the clergy care we need, I believe it will help address the tendency toward discouragement and will reduce the chance clergy will slip through the cracks.

Already, I can say that the personal impact on my life from that training has been significant. Which brings me to the topic of **sabbaticals**.

As was announced at our 2015 Synod, Bishop Stephen, Bishop Trevor and I each planned a sabbatical leave. For each of us, 2016 marked the seventh year of our consecration, and we all in our way felt the need for a short sabbatical break.

We thank God the diocese released us to do this. So during 2016, we each took a sabbatical in turn, allowing us to cover for each other – first Bishop Stephen took a few months early in the year, then I took some time for refreshment in the middle of the year, and right now Bishop Trevor, although he is present with us, is actually taking his sabbatical leave.

I cannot speak so much for my fellow bishops, although I can see the evidence refreshment and renewal in each of them, but I can certainly speak to the value that I found in my time away. I could share that after our conference on coaching that Scott Thomas and I went away for a day to pray for what he described as a gospel life plan – a kind of mid-course correction and check-in with the Lord. What came to me very clearly, and what I then prayed, was that I would be able to fulfill and complete my years as bishop faithfully and finish strong.

That theme shaped my sabbatical leave and guided me as I sought to address areas of my life. I feel the Lord has built into me something of what is required in order for me to serve in the years ahead and finish strong.

Happily, for all three of us, taking a sabbatical was not only personally refreshing but benefitted our spouses and families as well. And it was meant to be a model, an example, to the clergy and parishes of our diocese, of the need and the value of such a time for renewal. We commend sabbaticals approximately every seven years to all our clergy. We have prepared some suggestions of how to negotiate that and how to make plans so that the time is beneficial and well spent.

Thanksgiving for Partners in the Gospel in our Diocese

Today I stand amazed and so thankful to God that I have the privilege of serving this group of congregations, people and clergy and fellow bishops.

I am so grateful and impressed with **Bishop Stephen** and the work he is doing not only as rector of this great Church of the Good Shepherd here in Vancouver but as the missionary bishop who serves the Asian and Multicultural Ministries in Canada (AMMIC). In a country where literally all the nations of the world are coming to our shores, making Canada their new home, this strategy and his leadership have such significance. Furthermore, Bishop Stephen has very intentionally forged strong ties with Primates and Bishops in Asia, frequently inviting them to Canada to minister to their diaspora communities and to strengthen the church. I thank God for Bishop Stephen.

I thank God for **Bishop Trevor** and for the incredible skills and experience he brings, giving him a godly wisdom and a courageous and forward-looking, strategic mind which enables him to offer such significant leadership in the west, in ANiC in general, and, in fact, in the ACNA. Bishop Trevor's gifts in mediation and leadership training have proven of great usefulness far beyond our diocesan boundaries.

I am so grateful for my predecessor **Bishop Don Harvey** who is now our Episcopal Vicar. Bishop Don has a servant's heart and has made himself available to me to serve in many situations and

capacities as well as being very involved in the churches locally in St John's Newfoundland. Bishop Don continues to travel extensively and is of great encouragement to many congregations across the diocese. He and his wife Trudy gives leadership to the Legacy Fund as was mentioned and this past year he and Canon Tom Carman participated in an extremely important conference for training in the ministry of deliverance. It is my hope later in the Synod for Bishop Don to give a brief report of that significant conference and the implications for our diocese. I'm also very grateful that Bishop Don – as both Episcopal Vicar and Vice-Chair of the ARDFC – is representing us at the Anglican Relief and Development Fund's global meetings in Singapore not long after Synod

I thank God for **Bishop Ron Ferris** who wonderfully, even as an experienced and gifted bishop, has turned his attention primarily to the planting and growing of the Church of the Ascension in Langley, BC. His example speaks volumes of the significance a church planting in our day and shows his heart for the gospel and for building faithful gospel-sharing Anglican churches.

And, as I have already mentioned, we thank God for **Bishop Malcolm** who continues to be such an encouragement in the work of the Gospel in Manitoba and in the diocese.

It is such a joy and an honor for me to serve as part of this team of godly bishops and I thank God for them.

I also thank God for our **Archdeacons** which includes our Dean for AMMiC. Whenever we meet – which while a couple times a year is not often enough – we find such encouragement and refreshment in each other's company that I really feel the Lord moves us forward, as a diocese, as result of those meetings. These archdeacons work extremely hard not only in leading their respective congregations, but also in serving the whole region. Their task is a very demanding but is a very significant part of the way we give leadership and care for our diocese.

I thank God for our **ANiC Council**. They work extremely hard and have sought to be truly strategic in their discussions and planning. Clearly finances is a very big part of their responsibility. This year under their leadership we have had a complete audit which will be reported on later in Synod. I, along with those who have worked on fundraising and stewardship, praise God that we ended this financial year slightly in the black. We thank everyone for their incredible sacrificial generosity. The Council has worked very hard framing a 2016-2017 budget driven by our priorities. I thank God for our Council and their leadership.

I'm very proud of and thank God for **the staff** that serves us all. They are very few in number for the immense amount of work they do and the incredible burden of responsibility they carry day to day under the leadership of our national director **John McDonald**. John is an incredibly gifted godly leader for whom I'm so grateful. Everything from policy, issues, governance, canon law, and finances to human resources and on and on... John serves us all with great competence and grace from the Lord. He has an amazing team that serves with him – **Jessica Underdown** is executive administrative assistant; **Jamie Wood** and **Jeri-Ann Abbott**, together with **Larry Lavery** care for our finances; and **Marilyn Jacobson** is responsible for ANiC communications. These people are incredibly competent but also very devoted to the Lord. And we are so blessed to have faithful **volunteers** who support us in the office, including **Paula Valentine** who is helping us here at synod. And finally I want to mention our **intercessors** – a wonderful group

of people who come every Wednesday to our office in Burlington to pray. What they do is so vital to our ministry. All our staff and volunteers all serve in their respective capacities as unto the Lord and for His glory. I thank God for our staff and volunteer.

Today I want to particularly thank God for **Canon Paul Donison** who along with his family have now moved from Ottawa to Texas to give leadership to Christ Church Plano. Fortunately for us it was possible for him to continue in his capacity as Canon for Diocesan Events until the end of this Synod. This has meant that we continue to enjoy the benefits of his gifted leadership and administrative skills. He has organized our Synods since 2012, as he has this one. Knowing that this was his last event as ANiC Canon for Diocesan Events he has taken a relatively low profile but I have asked him to be the MC for our Thursday banquet which features Bishop Bill Atwood who also comes from the Dallas, Texas area. At this time I want to thank God for Canon Paul and assure him of our prayers for him and Monica and their family and for their new ministry in Texas. Knowing that we all serve the same Province, we trust there will be many future opportunities for labouring together. I thank God for the blessing he has been to our Diocese and to our Synod, but also to the St Peter and St Paul's, Ottawa where he served as rector. Thank you Canon Paul.

I don't think I've ever done this before, but I've been remiss. I thank God for my wife, **Judy**. I cannot imagine serving the Lord in this capacity or any other without my dearest of friends and wonderful wife now for over 40 years. One of the delights of my sabbatical leave was that Judy and I did literally everything together during those months and we found we enjoyed so much every moment together.

Thanksgiving for the Synod that was not supposed to happen

2016 has been an extraordinary year in so many ways, globally, and in North America. The coming election in the US serves to remind us of how unsettled the whole world is, and that nothing is too improbable or too weird to become reality.

Here in Canada, the passing of legislation legalizing Assisted Suicide is so startling and horrific that we now know anything could happen right here.

It has also been quite a year for Anglicanism beginning in January with the Primates meeting in England hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The mild sanctioning of TEC, which was seen as necessary for the restoring to good order to the Communion, has since become meaningless. This, together with the decision by the ACoC to move toward changing its marriage canon, has further destabilized the Communion.

In the midst of all this, the Biblically faithful majority in the Communion – the Global Anglican Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, the GAFCON movement, and the Global South – have been strengthened. I am so looking forward to Bishop Bill's report tonight. Of course, our own Bishop Trevor also was recently a participant at the Global South meeting in Cairo. Perhaps the instability of the Communion has served to clarify the need of GAFCON and the Global South.

Here in Canada, the recent ACoC General Synod and perhaps the more recent episcopal elections at the Diocese of Toronto, have obviously caused great concern among orthodox Anglican friends who remain at this time in the ACoC so much so that we in ANiC – both our

national office and clergy all across the country – have been receiving an unprecedented number of inquiries from concerned and confused orthodox Canadian Anglicans.

I mentioned earlier that this Synod was intended to be held electronically, but through the strong and, I believe, prophetic word that came at the end of last Synod, we adjusted to what we heard God saying. So here we are at a Synod that, in my mind, was not supposed to happen. I thank God that He overrules our plans and establishes His. He knew we needed to gather, if not for our benefit, for the benefit of our orthodox Canadian Anglican friends.

We have received so many calls, in fact, that we began to ask the Lord what this meant and whether there was action of any sort we were to take. Our conclusion was that we were to serve our friends without any expectations as to what they may decide to do or not do. We concluded that, given we had a Synod happening, we should invite these friends to our Synod – which we have done and a few have been able to accept this invitation (and perhaps others are watching via Anglican TV). We also will hold information meetings across the country as soon as we can organize them.

More than that, we recognize the importance of GAFCON and that that movement is something that can help us all as we pray for an open door for the gospel. We know that GAFCON leadership is very concerned about Canada and are willing and eager to stand with us. It is our hope therefore to invite them as soon as we possibly can to come here for the sake of orthodox Anglicans, some of whom are distressed and confused and all of whom desire to see an open door for the gospel in these days of such uncertainty but potentially such great opportunity for the gospel.

ACNA is a GAFCON Province. Our Primate is a GAFCON Primate as well as a member of the Global South Steering Committee. ANiC is a GAFCON Diocese.

Could it be that, though we grieve the developments in the ACoC, perhaps the Lord in his infinite mercy and grace is at work and very possibly, through GAFCON, could throw open a door for the gospel?

That has yet to be seen but what is very clear is that we need to pray for one another, stand for one another, and be fervent and constant in prayer, with thanksgiving, praying for a door to open for the gospel. May God grant that we as Anglicans will be ready, immediately and boldly, to go through that door and, by God's grace, see a harvest such we have never before experienced!

It is important and it is exciting and so we pray for an open door for the gospel:

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hardwood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honour of your name. Amen

Respectfully submitted,

+ Charles