

## **Bishop's Charge- Eastern Regional Assembly- April 18, 2013.**

May I begin by personally welcoming everyone again to this exciting and, I believe, potentially historic event which is one of three regional assemblies, all happening at the same time across Canada, this being the Eastern regional assembly.

My heart today is filled with thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus Christ. We know, this is his will for us, in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18) and today it is not difficult because the evidence of the Lord's grace and favour, goodness and love is surrounding us all, in so many ways.

I thank you for hearing the call and making, what I am sure has been substantial sacrifices to be able to be here. I am grateful for the people who are praying fervently for a visitation of the Holy Spirit in our time together such that all of us would leave this place, changed and better equipped to serve the Lord Jesus in the days ahead.

I'm very grateful to our Diocesan and Moderator, Bishop Donald Harvey, for his vision which he presented at our Synod in Victoria in November 2011 whereby we were invited to have these regional assemblies, in a sense, in place of our normal Synod though by Canon Law there will be an electronic Synod later in November, 2103. Nevertheless, these regional assemblies make it possible for more people to be involved at a more local level and we pray at a more effective level too. I am grateful that we three Suffragan Bishops have been given the opportunity to lead the planning to welcome all their respective delegates from their Region and, yes, to present a Charge which is a first for us all.

Marking the fact that this is just one of three, later today Bishop Don will be climbing on a plane and flying west in order to participate in the other two assemblies which are meeting together in the same site at Good Shepherd Church, Vancouver.

We are all delighted to welcome Archbishop Hector (or known as Tito) Zavala who is the Primate of the Southern Cone. The Southern Cone, as a Province of the Anglican Communion, will always hold a special place in our hearts for ANiC because it was Archbishop Tito's predecessor, Archbishop Greg Venables and the House of Bishops (which Archbishop Tito was always one) of the Province of the Southern Cone who courageously welcomed us in November 2007 under their care with Bishop Don and Bishop Malcolm becoming members of that House of Bishops so that ANiC could become an ecclesial body at that time. Of course we are now a Diocese of the Anglican Church in North America with Archbishop Duncan as our Primate but you, Archbishop Tito, and your Province, will always be precious in our hearts as the ones who met us at our point of need. It would have been very easy to say it was not possible but we're so grateful that that's not what happened.

We're grateful Archbishop Tito that you are a Primate of GAFCON and that you are also here to give us a sense of what's happening in the Southern Cone. It is a topic of great interest and concern to us also of how ARDFC may be playing a part in some way in the work that you are about in the Southern Cone and so we are very thankful you are here to help us understand these things.

I want to say that we're all delighted to be here at the hospitality of the Rector, the Reverend Ray David Glenn, and the people of St. George's Burlington in this wonderful facility which is so conducive to this kind of event. People can well imagine, I'm sure, how expensive it would be to rent such a facility but because we're here as guests of St. George's, there is actually no cost at all. We are extremely grateful for your hospitality.

I'm also very grateful to the volunteers who have worked to prepare and welcome and keep us going here this week under the leadership of Louise LePage and her hardworking committee. I'm also grateful to our National Director, John MacDonald, and our national ANiC staff housed here in this same building who have done all the groundwork for all three Regional Assemblies.

I want to thank the Reverend Garth Hunt for coordinating our intercessors and the intercessory prayer for this event

I'm very grateful for the many who will be sharing in one way or another in this event, the Reverends Keith Ganzer and Ray David Glenn for their Bible teaching, to the Archdeacons who, along with others they have enlisted to help them, are all leading the five workshops and taking part in other ways as well and for the many who shared already at the Clergy Day here yesterday.

Finally, I want to say thank you to Archdeacon Darrell Critch who has organized our worship. At this point I would also like to mention that we are praying for Bill Foley's healing after his surgery. Bill was to be the organist but ended up having two surgeries in close succession and thankfully is doing well but sadly can't be here. I am very grateful to Alexander Pryor for jumping in in place of Bill and playing so wonderfully. I am thankful for the choir of last evening and for Bryan Hunt and the Worship Group who will be leading us, particularly on Friday evening's Eucharist.

And now having begun with thanksgiving to the Lord and the many who have allowed themselves to be used for this event, I now want to reflect on our life together in this my first charge as a Bishop.

I am going stop and pray again using the Collect for the Tuesday after Easter in the Prayer Book:

ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech thee, that as by thy special grace thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

As you are no doubt aware and has already been read in the Epistle, during last evening's service, our theme is Colossians 1:28 and 29:

*"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."*

It is evident that Paul is very focused in his life and ministry. His thinking and prayer is focused. He knows what he wants to see happen. He recognizes, as it says in 2 Corinthians 5, that he now sees

people in a different way just as he sees Jesus in a different way (2 Corinthians 5:14). His thinking is not only focused, it is comprehensive. What he describes in these verses applies to every person that he would ever come across and that's why it's so powerful. It means that if we are informed and changed to think the way he thinks, we automatically have a clear idea what we're doing and what we need to do and what we hope will happen in the Lord.

- A. **Him we proclaim**- These three words dominate and rightly are the complete focus not only of these two verses, but the whole of the letter of Paul to the Colossians. "Him we proclaim" means that the Lord Jesus is our only hope and that it is He that everyone needs. That means that we recognize that the only standing we have before God is as a result of his substitutionary payment for us on the Cross, his glorious resurrection, his ascension to heaven, the giving of the Holy Spirit and his glorious return. It is to him and him alone that we look. We recognize that the gospel of Jesus is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes. We recognize to proclaim him means to live in his words, the Word written, the Bible, and to allow it to change our thinking and living and to equip us for service. To proclaim him is to depend on the word of God. Jesus said: "*Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what I say?*" (Luke 6:46). It is impossible to faithfully proclaim him and not live under the authority of the Bible. It is also impossible to proclaim him and to be seeking to live out our own plans and hoping God will bless them. To proclaim him means to see what he is doing in the world and participate with him rather than expecting him to back us up in our plans and efforts.
- B. **Warning everyone** - these words make clear that we recognize that to proclaim Jesus acknowledges the fact that eternity is at stake. People need to know and be warned that to neglect Jesus is to miss out on salvation and to live under the certain judgment of God. So if we have any compassion or love in our hearts at all then we necessarily are driven to warn people of the consequences of failing to receive Jesus. Gospel proclamation is where it's at. It's the loving thing to do. It's the priority and that's what the world needs and, yes, the gospel works. Listen to these two quotes, one by David Branierd (1718-47), a missionary to North American Indians in New England, who was a contemporary of the great Jonathan Edwards and William Booth (1829-1912) the founder of the Salvation Army. Branierd says: "*I care not where I go, or how I live, or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep I dream of them; when I awake they are first in my thoughts... no amount of scholastic attainment, of able and profound exposition of brilliant and stirring eloquence can atone for the absence of a deep impassioned sympathetic love for human souls.*" And listen to what Booth says: "*Not called! Did you say? "Not heard the call", I think you should say. Put your ear down to the Bible, and hear Him bid you go and pull sinners out of the fire of sin. Put your ear down to the burdened, agonized heart of humanity, and listen to his pitiful wail for help. Go stand by the gates of hell and hear the damned and entreat you to go to their father's house and bid their brothers and sisters, and servants and masters not to come there. And then look Christ in the face, whose mercy you have professed to obey, and tell him whether you will join heart and soul and body and circumstances in the march to publish his mercy to the world.*" Who talks like these men anymore? Is that a sign of our growing enlightenment or could it be more accurately the fact that none seem to be thinking this way or articulating things in this way is more as a sign of the impoverishment of our

hearts and the failure to take in a deep concern for the lost? Perhaps more than any other, the two words “warning everyone” convict me and call me to my need for a work of the Spirit of God in my heart and life.

- C. **and teaching everyone with all wisdom** These words also make clear that having received the Lord Jesus and being born of the Spirit is not the end of the story. Just as Jesus, in the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19, 20 said, *“go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”*, so the apostle Paul is making it clear that faithful teaching is required. 2 Timothy 3 makes it clear the Bible is necessary for bringing the warning and leading people to Christ, bringing the wisdom that is required for salvation and is also required for the sanctification and equipping of the saints.
- D. **That we may present everyone mature in Christ**-these words show that when Paul met anyone, he looked down the line and saw them first being converted, being born of the Spirit, becoming truly a child of God and then further down the line, as ones who are maturing and fruitful and this happens by teaching whereby they grow up to the full stature of maturity in Christ. Ephesians 4 makes it clear that this is not done in isolation, not serving by ourselves, but it is part of the function of the body of Christ toward one another and the end result is full maturity. Any goal less than that is to fall far short of God's purposes.
- E. **For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.**-It is clear that unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it. It is clear the power and the grace and the love and the success of our efforts are dependent on the Lord alone by the Holy Spirit to do this work. But what is interesting is that Paul says “for this I toil” and even goes on to say “struggling”. Evidently, though the Lord is doing it, it is hard work and it feels like a struggle and it feels like we're spinning our wheels and there are times when we feel like we are wasting our time and that this is tedious for sure. I am reminded of the words of someone that probably nobody else has ever heard of, who was known as Charles Tremendous Jones, who used to say: *“the first law of leadership is work”* and then he would go on to say *“all work is lousy and if what you're doing isn't lousy, then what you're doing isn't work”*. Now these statements could easily be misunderstood and they certainly are not elegantly or delicately put but the point is clear: Work, though it may be satisfying in some ways, usually has a dimension of being something you just have to do, something that your body cries out “I don't want to do that, that this is not my area of strength and gifting”. There is an aspect of obedience and there's an aspect of tedium that all the time when it's in the Lord is trusting that even this onerous, difficult, unwanted task is actually what God wants me to do and it is not in vain in the Lord. If we are only doing what we want to do and assuming therefore that is what it means to operate in my gifting for that is what the Holy Spirit surely must be doing, then I think it's fair to say, based on this passage, that we are not doing everything that God is calling us to and likely our ministry and our life in a serious way is being diminished and our ministry is undermined. To trust the Lord to work is to personally work hard. Remember what Paul said to the Thessalonians: *“for you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”* (1 Thessalonians 2:9) Doing God's will is always made possible only by the grace and power of God and by his motivation but it always

feels like work in some way. Paul said *“work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”* (Philippians 2:12,13)

All of the above reflections have made me come to the following conclusions: 1) Our ministry from beginning to end is to focus on Jesus and his salvation and his word. 2) We must make Gospel proclamation the centre of our life and things like church planting to be the platform through which we do the task which is to proclaim the Gospel. 3) Involvement in the Bible is absolutely essential .We cannot proclaim Jesus faithfully and we cannot warn and teach in all wisdom without engaging the word of God personally and proclaiming it faithfully. 4) We must have a long-term view of growing in maturity in Christ for every person and for every congregation. 5) It is going to be hard work. It's going to feel at times tedious and unfruitful but the promise of God is that he is working powerfully in us to do this great work.

As I reflect on that passage and the conclusions which I have come to, I have to say that I am heartened by the mission and vision statement which we of ANiC have because I believe both these statements have the possibility and the prospect of holding us together in harness to make sure we concentrate on the right things.

**ANiC Mission Statement-** building biblically faithful Gospel sharing Anglican congregations across the country.

To do this our **vision statement** involves 4E's: every region, equipped membership, enduring congregations and excellence in leadership.

What I like about both statements is that they both recognize that though “starting” is absolutely essential, it's not the whole story. Building means starting where there is no building and then continuing to build but where there is a building, it means developing it to its full and complete stature. Warning, teaching, training, equipping, all are framed and driven by the Bible towards enduring congregations, equipped membership and excellent leaders which are very much consistent with Colossians 1: 28, 29.

I think the word “Anglican” in the mission statement is important because it acknowledges the fact that we love the Anglican Way and believe it to be an excellent way to be a disciple of Christ and to be the church where the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance. It is a humble and rich way which is effective and worthy of sharing as our contribution to the Body of Christ.

**This regional assembly** has been planned and framed according to this passage and the above conclusions. The workshops, which have been planned I'm so grateful that the planned workshops are being led by our Regionals Archdeacons and, in most cases they have a small group assisting them. The topic of each workshop is very much to promote faithful, mighty Gospel proclamation. It is our prayer that we will soon be able to say across the country what the apostle Paul said of what happened in Thessalonica: *“ because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit*

*and full conviction.*” We are believing God and want to take seriously the fact that there is a harvest ready right now which we, as part of the body of Christ, are charged to bring in.

To make sure that this Regional Assembly is dominated by the words “him we proclaim” I enlisted the help of two faithful Bible teachers, the Reverend Keith Ganzer and the Reverend Ray David Glenn, to open the word, in total four times over our two days, using four Old Testament passages to teach and preach Jesus. Just as it says of the risen Jesus, on that first Easter evening with two men on the way to Emmaus (which appropriately is the name of the church that Keith Ganzer is rector of): *“beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.”*(Luke 24:27) On every page of the Bible Jesus is proclaimed and so I'm grateful that that can be modeled and hopefully will bring encouragement by this teaching.

All five of the workshops are planned in the light of Colossians 1:28, 29, thinking about Gospel proclamation.

Accordingly, there is a workshop which will be about our desperate need for God to do the work. *“Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it.”* (Psalm 127:1) We need to know what the Lord is doing and wants to do and then participate with him. We need his Grace, his favour, his power, his leading of his will and his Holy Spirit. Therefore we need to pray and fast. We long and need to learn how to pray, how to hear the voice of the Lord, and how to move out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Archdeacon Paul Crossland is leading a workshop entitled: **Prayer and Fasting (paving a way for effective gospel proclamation)**. Many of you need to attend that workshop and to pray that the Lord would use it to set you on a path of growing effective prayer and discerning our Lord's will.

There is also a workshop on the Bible. We are a Bible people not just in word alone but hopefully more and more in reality. All of us, not just clergy, need to pray and work towards becoming more and more at home in the Bible. Paul challenged his young prodigy with these words: *“do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”* (2 Timothy 2:15) We need to know what the Bible actually says not what it sort of says. We need to meditate on it day and night, which I would suggest will require, for most, memorizing parts of the word. If we are to preach or to teach in any form we need to do the work of engaging the text and making sure that what we say is actually letting the Bible speak for itself as opposed to using it as a springboard for our own few thoughts. We need to grow in the Bible and if we don't, the expected future of ANiC and ACNA will be brief indeed. So there is a workshop which is being led by Archdeacon Paul Charbonneau entitled: **Diving deeper into God's word (a necessity for effective gospel proclamation)**. There will be no fruit and certainly no fruit that remains if we are not a Bible people. Many of you need to take the time to attend that workshop.

Some of you may be aware that around this time in 2011, I became ill and was off work for a couple of months. During that time, I believe the Lord met me in a powerful way and challenged me particularly around ministry to children. I was reminded of the words of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah who was soon to become the father of John the Baptist. These words were actually a quote from Malachi 4. The angel said of John the Baptist *“and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the*

*hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.*" (Luke 1:17) Previously, the part of this verse which had impressed me was, "a people prepared" for the coming of the Lord. That continues to motivate me. God is calling forth a people for his own name's sake, a new community to be ready for the return of Jesus which is most certainly coming and it could be soon. But what struck me at that time in 2011 was the part about children, "turning the hearts of the fathers back to the children". I realized, as never before, that it is a very bleak thing indeed to be a child without Christ. This is a very dark world but when you have the light of Christ in your heart and life the Lord Jesus can make your way through this world. Even at a very young age, children can and need to know that they have an eternal home with Jesus and be secure in that knowledge. I believe we need to take seriously the fact that God sees children as our responsibility, all children, and we need to lead them to Christ. The statistics are very clear that children and youth are more open to the Gospel and more easily able to respond to the Lord than adults often are. But the facts are that many of our congregations are made up of adults and even more elderly adults of which I am one. We are often very few in numbers in terms of children and youth. Just because that is the situation now does not mean that's the way it has to be or should be or will be. I believe we have a call and an opportunity to reach out to children, not just our own children or grandchildren and members of our congregation, but all children. We must find a way to reach children and youth with the Gospel. Accordingly, we have a workshop led by Archdeacon Tim Parent and his wife, Deacon Jane, entitled: **Ministry to children and youth (a central and strategic part of gospel proclamation)**. I hope many of you will be attending that workshop.

One of the joys of this movement is perhaps partly because we are so small and starting from nothing is that it is not difficult to realize that we must plant churches in every community. The exciting thing is that studies show that the more churches there are, the more effective gospel proclamation there is, as well. Planting churches is the way of extending and expanding our gospel reach. The motivation for planting churches is not just to make ANiC bigger, and therefore, perhaps more stable and secure as an institution. It is to reach out with the Gospel. Though it is true, so far, that most of us come out of the Anglican Church of Canada and by necessity we have needed to plant churches in order have a congregation to worship with and still we are delighted to continue to stand with people as God leads them in this way, our real game plan is evangelism. It is gospel proclamation. It is reaching out to those who don't yet know Christ. Many of us will remember at the inaugural service and the enthronement of Archbishop Duncan as our Primate, that he threw out what seemed like an impossible and ridiculous challenge which I know he believes and we believe was a prophetic word and call to plant 1000 new congregations in the next five years. We are living with that call to plant churches and don't intend to stop after five years. It is our prayer and hope that church planting and multiplication of churches as platforms for gospel proclamation will become part of our DNA and will be a natural and automatic part of our thinking. Recently the new vicar, Alan Hawkins for Anglican 1000, instituted what he is calling the 1 2 3 program. In the next two years we're asking every congregation to consider planting **one church** in the next **two years** using **one of the three strategies** which they laid out. So I'm delighted we have a workshop to consider church planting led by Archdeacon Michael McKinnon who is hard at work at

stimulating church planting in New England and is presently chairing our Church Planting Working Group. The title of that workshop is: **Planting churches (a platform for gospel proclamation)**. Many of you need to attend that workshop. It may be that some of you have assumed because your congregation is small that this has nothing to do with you but it does and I hope you will attend that workshop.

Finally, there is a workshop which in a way is quite different from the others but is very much about growing in maturity in Christ and fulfilling our responsibility in gospel proclamation. We live in a world in which all of us are affected and wounded in ways which encumber our ability to grow in Christ. There is a need for growth and healing in wholeness in our lives so that we can grow in maturity more and more. Unless these specific things are dealt with, we may never be able to become all that the Lord would want us to be in our lives here on earth. Many of us were involved in discussions and debates which helped lead to the formation of the Anglican Network in Canada. We are well aware that whether we like it or not, the presenting issue which moved things forward was around the blessing of same-sex unions. During those discussions, and since, many of us have become aware that there is a need for a growing purity and consistency in our teaching and in our lives around marriage and family and sexuality. If we take the stand that we took, then by necessity, we are obligated to grow in our own sexual wholeness and to be living more and more in the light whereby our family lives are an example of godliness and wholeness. This means that sexual brokenness must be addressed as part of our growth and discipleship as part of our gospel proclamation. For the past two synods we have been fortunate to have the Reverend Dawn MacDonald at the invitation of our Bishop Don. In part because of her mighty teaching, we have a desire to grow in this area and so there is a workshop led by Archdeacon Darrell Critch which is entitled: **Ministry to sexual brokenness ( all part of faithful gospel proclamation)**. Many of you will want to attend this workshop for personal reasons as well as for our ministry in our congregations and ANiC in general in this sensitive area in the future.

May I say at this point, that having workshops is not an unusual thing. Having said that, it is our prayer that these workshops will cause many of us to begin to be connected with others in an ongoing way more and more in the quest to grow in each of these areas towards more mighty and faithful gospel proclamation. We need one another. We even have the name "Network" in our name which surely should invite us to a higher level of involvement in each other's lives than we've experienced so far. I hope and pray that you will get one another's e-mail addresses; that there will be follow-up conference calls and that you will make sure is started here in the workshops will be allowed to continue and grow so that the maturing as a thoroughly Christian organizations and churches who are active and mighty in gospel proclamation will be able to happen.

More than that, I wanted you to know that I have invited a number of special guests to be present here today. Some I have known for years and some I have just met but all of them I hold in high esteem and recognize them as being very effective in gospel proclamation. Each one represents an organization or a "parachurch" organization usually interdenominational which has a proven track record of assisting the church in a specific area of gospel ministry. I asked these people to come because I wanted to acknowledge that we need their ministry. Partnering in the Gospel is clearly the way forward. We do not need or want to reinvent the wheel on any of the areas that we are seeking to think about when it is



very evident that these leaders and their groups and others are being very effective in gospel ministry in ways that we can just learn from. It may be also, that in working shoulder to shoulder there might be something that they can learn from us as well. So I invited these folks to come and observe this morning and also for me to introduce them as just being a few of the folks which I hope we will find ourselves working alongside in the days ahead:

Members of Regional Assembly, may I introduce **Pastor Dr. Sam Martin**, who is the founder and leader of **Arms of Jesus Children's Mission**. May I introduce **David's Thakkar**, who is with **Young Life** here in Ontario. May I introduce **Rob Lukings**, who is with **Child Evangelism Fellowship** Ontario. May I introduce **Bruce Chapman**, who is with the **Rocky Ridge Ranch Ministry**, not far from here. May I introduce **Doug McKenzie** who is the CEO of **Voice of the Martyrs** Canada. May introduce **Alexander Best** who leads a ministry in Toronto and the University of Toronto called **One Mission**

Welcome dear friends! We are honoured that you were able to take the time to be with us. We pray God's blessing on your ministry and also pray that in the days ahead we can labour together shoulder to shoulder as partners in the Gospel.

**Governance and Structures-** So far I have concentrated entirely in this charge on gospel proclamation and facilitating that more and more. What has become clear to me in my various experiences especially over the past few years but now also as a Bishop, is that though structures and polity and the way we do things are secondary, nevertheless they ultimately make it possible for many people to work together, under God, but if done badly can actually divide and hinder the ministry. Therefore, how we structure ourselves, Canons, Constitution Councils, bylaws incorporation, finances Dioceses etc. all either facilitate good ministry, help co-ordinate it or block it. Structures matter. We all want to be responsive to the Spirit of God but we are called to work together as the Body of Christ. Therefore I'm very grateful that Bishop Ronald Ferris and his small Task Force are soliciting input as they think about the whole issue of governance. We say we are as Anglicans- Episcopally led and Synodically governed. The question is what does that mean and how do we work that out in real terms in our life together in ANiC? You'll be hearing a brief announcement about that from the Reverend Dr. Brent Stiller on behalf of Bishop Ron's Task Force.

Bishop Don has also reminded us that part of the purpose of these Regional Assemblies is to afford us an experience of being separate so that we might better contemplate what it might be like if ANiC was to separate into more than one Diocese. We want to think about: Will such a step move us forward in our task of gospel proclamation? Would it make collaboration and cooperation easier? Will it make for a better use of our finances and of all ministry resources and leadership? What about the timing of such an idea? We are asking you to think about these things. During our time together there will be a brief presentation which John MacDonald will give towards together us prayerfully considering future some possible steps on this important topic of multiple Dioceses. At the other two Assemblies, they too are thinking about this. We must do anything and everything we can, as the Lord leads, to facilitate more effective gospel ministry and so we must consider the division of Dioceses and what that would look like for us all in ANiC as a possible next step in order to move forward in the gospel.

As we have always said, this is not a Synod in the formal sense. There will not be motions, debate and elections. In a strictly legal sense, this gathering has no authority to enact things but it does have the power to begin to move ministry and ultimately, the direction of our thinking and eventually our decision-making. In other words, we need your input and we hope that these gathering will begin to create prayerful and thoughtful interaction.

**Finances-** Another revelation which has come to me and others over the last five years is how much finances play a part in our life together. I don't think anyone thinks our life is about finances. There may be some who believe that we could operate more like a business. Others are equally clear we must not see ourselves as a business. One thing is clear to all is that finances in church work has a way of forcing us to have to trust the Lord in a very real way and that clearly is a good thing. Recently at an ANiC Council meeting one of our counselors suggested that our ongoing financial stress is a spiritual reality which requires of us prayer and fasting. I completely agree with that and believe that perhaps sometime soon, we need to identify days or a season for prayer and fasting, where we, as a people, can wait on God together around our finances until we feel the Lord has given us his answer. We are all in agreement that the purpose of the Diocese is to serve the congregations, not the other way round. So it's not trying to build a structure with an ever-increasing demand on finances. For this reason, I do appreciate the 10 10 10 plan and appreciate so much there, our Campaign Coordinator, Archdeacon Ron Corcoran, when he speaks- makes 2 of his 3 sessions to be teaching on biblical tithing and giving and only one session on actually a plan for what he calls the 20 20 program. This, I believe, is honouring to the Lord and ultimately says we are determined to operate in a biblical way and to trust God together. Having said all that, I just want to acknowledge to you today that finances continue to be a source of stress and concern, not only for us but also the Anglican Church in North America of which we are a Diocese is experiencing exactly the same thing. We are surviving, gloriously and much is being accomplished but it is still basically a "hand to mouth" existence most of the time. Do pray. Do give as God leads and do share with us if you believe the Lord is telling you something that we need to consider.

**Conclusions and questions-** the final chapters of the book of Genesis tells a fascinating story of Joseph and his brothers and his father Jacob and the move to Egypt. After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were fearful that he would seek vindication for what they had done to him. Instead he said to them, "*as for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good to bring up about this present result to preserve many people alive*". (Genesis 50:20) For me, this verse of Scripture demonstrates the amazing capacity of our God to work for good even despite and even using the fallenness and sinfulness of man. Those brothers clearly did have evil in mind for Joseph and did what they did which ultimately led to Joseph being sold in slavery to Egypt. This was the amazing way, along with imprisonment for Joseph, where God had him situated ready to be used to provide God's plan of salvation which ultimately saved Jacob and those very brothers but also the rest of Egypt. In my view, the excitement of the development of this thing called ACNA and ANiC is the possibility of a tremendous gospel ministry springing even from Anglicans. I believe there is a harvest ahead and we are meant to act to prepare and to work towards that harvest and to be prepared to bring to full maturity those whom he gives us. Dear friends, we have been given an incredible opportunity. There is a door wide open for the gospel i.n these days

The call, in the light of Colossians 1, is actually to become a thoroughly Christian church: one that is motivated and informed by the things that are on God's heart as revealed in his Word, lived out in the power and love by his Holy Spirit and bearing fruit that will remain all to the glory of God so that we and all the whole world will know that he is the Lord.

For me, I am prepared and eager, in the light of such an amazing gospel, because of the desperate need of this broken world, and because we did not choose him but he chose us and called us to bear fruit, therefore to offer my life to Jesus as a living sacrifice and to pray and seek to be used in gospel proclamation unto a church, which becomes more and more in line with the character of Jesus, more and more mighty and powered by the Holy Spirit, and more and more a means to bring glory to him who is the King of Kings.

I would like to invite you and the congregation you are representing to consider a fresh offering of yourself to such a gospel mandate and to be about preparing yourself and us to do that in the biggest and most comprehensive way we can. I would like to invite our friends of other denominations who also share this burden for the lost for us to join together as partners in the gospel.

To you as an individual I give this charge and challenge 1) Begin today to beg the Lord to help you grow in prayer 2. Begin today to take steps towards growing deeper in the Bible and increasing your intake and your application of it. And 3. Begin today to pray for the names of perhaps three people who presently don't know the Lord. Then commit ourselves to pray for these folk and witness to them as opportunity is given until each comes to the Lord and is born into the kingdom and then begins to grow towards full maturity in Christ. Let us ask God to make us ready to be a witness to each of these persons on our list by being better equipped with the gospel and our testimony ready to share.

To you as a congregation, of whatever size, I give this charge and challenge 1) Begin to seek and to plan to reach the children and youth in your area and perhaps make connection with groups who are already well equipped to work together with you on this. 2) Begin today to make plans for 1 2 3 church planting from your congregation and 3) Identify a means of increasing the quality of teaching and ministry and health and maturity for your people.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end and

May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip us with everything good that we may do his will working in us that which is pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Bishop Charlie Masters- Bishop Coadjutor- Eastern Regional Assembly- April 18, 2013.