

The Charge of Bishop Charlie Masters
Diocesan Bishop and Moderator of the Anglican Network in Canada
Seventh Annual Synod – November 5-7, 2014
Theme: *Now a people – a Bible people, a gospel people, a global people*

My dear friends,

Good morning. It is indeed good to be back in Ottawa. Mindful of the sad events right here on October 22/14, it was particularly meaningful yesterday afternoon to walk past the Canadian War Memorial where **Corporal Nathan Cirillo's** life was taken as he stood unarmed as an Honour Guard. This came the same week as **Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent** was killed in Quebec. The sense of need, therefore, to pray and the significance of praying from the steps of our **Parliament Buildings** is something we will all remember.

And here we are, the next day, after a wonderful and fitting evening in honour of our dear Founding Moderator and Diocesan Bishop, now our **Episcopal Vicar, Bishop Don Harvey** and his wife Trudy – toasted warmly by our first Primate Archbishop Greg Venables.

And so, a full day into our Seventh Annual Synod, the same day our Primate **Archbishop Foley Beach**, in his first visit to Canada since his own Investiture to become Archbishop and Primate of ACNA, will officiate this evening and preach at a service where, Lord willing, I will **formally be installed** as the second Diocesan Bishop. It is my privilege therefore now to offer my first Charge to you the leaders of this great Diocese.

Let us pray:

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.

1 Peter 2:9,10 *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you are not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

During the years that I was blessed to be pastor and Rector of a wonderful church - **St George's** ... (Did I mention I love being a pastor and I love now being a pastor of pastors?) ... one of my favorite services every year was the Family Service on Christmas morning at 9 AM. Because it was a family service, I felt free to concentrate on the children in the service and perhaps, at times, to be a little silly. Now I hasten to assure you that I was well within the range of all things being done “decently and in order”. Okay, perhaps I was at the far extreme of “decently and in order”, depending on your standards. But I can assure you the gospel was preached and by the mercy of God it was preached not just in word but I trust “in power, in the Holy Spirit and in deep conviction.” (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

Anyway, one year I stumbled into something that I’ve come to love. The gospel passage which was being considered was of course Luke 2. I would read a phrase or two of the appointed passage and then invite all the congregation, including the children to respond enthusiastically

and even perhaps to turn and encourage one another with the words **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**. So I read for instance: “and in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were filled with fear.” Then I pointed to the congregation and they said “Isn’t the Lord amazing!!” and then I read again: “and the angel said to them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. “And then I pointed to the congregation and they said: “Isn’t the Lord amazing!! And I read “for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”, again I pointed to the congregation and they said: “Isn’t the Lord amazing!!

Well I have found since that if ever I’m reading a passage of Scripture and it seems stale and boring and routine and dry, if I insert regularly the phrase “Isn’t the Lord amazing!!” it makes the passage come alive. So, for instance, on this little tour that I’m doing when I meet with the children and families, with the passage that I am teaching, we do exactly that. We break up the passage and after each phrase we shout together: “Isn’t the Lord amazing!”

I’d like to suggest, and I know this is not very typical for a charge, that we do exactly that for the two verses of Scripture which I have already read. After each phrase when I point to you, would you respond “Isn’t the Lord amazing!”? Let’s practice saying “Isn’t the Lord amazing!”.

But you are a chosen race **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

A royal priesthood **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

A holy nation **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

A people for his own possession **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

That you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

Once you had not received mercy; but now you have received mercy **“Isn’t the Lord amazing!”**

My prayer is that this little exercise, even in the middle of a bishop’s charge, will convey to all of us something of the **wonder and joy of how great is our God**... how amazing and wonderful is His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ... and how incredibly gracious is the Holy Spirit who delivers to us all the benefits of Jesus’ passion so that we who are in Christ Jesus know that we have been blessed “with every blessing in the spiritual places” (Ephesians 1:3)... know that we are absolutely secure in him... know that we have been born again unto a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3)... and know that our inheritance in him is kept in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4).

We are immeasurably blessed! We cannot lose when we are in Jesus! “If God be for us who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31) and “nothing can separate us from the love of God” (Romans 8; 38, 39).

Jesus is the one who has been rejected by men but was chosen as precious to be the **chief cornerstone** by the Father. Isn’t the Lord amazing! When the builders rejected him... the very act of rejection which led to the cross... that very cross ended up placing him as the strategic

and only possible chief cornerstone. It is he who is the key to absolutely everything. What we do with him ultimately determines whether or not our lives are built on him unto a glorious edifice to God and we become living stones as he is the living stone or, if we reject him or fail to receive him by faith, we find that we are actually dashed against that rock which was meant to be our salvation which becomes the means through which our judgment is sealed. Just as a cross is, for those who have faith, a sign of life and forgiveness and healing and health and eternal life in him so, for those who reject him, it becomes a sign of judgment because God judged sin on the cross.

What is also amazing is that, not only do we have a standing which is secure in the hand of one whose grip is firm, no one can snatch us out of the hand of the Father. (John 10:27-30) Not only do we have a standing in him but, wonder of wonders, we have a calling in these days which is to declare the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Dear friends, I confess during my weaker moments over the last years that there have been times since 2008 that I have been **discouraged and worried** about the slowness of the response to the gospel which I perceived across the country. But when I ponder these truths found in God's word, I cannot remain discouraged.

And so today, I stand before you as the new diocesan Bishop, **deeply grateful** for my dear friend, our founding Bishop and Moderator, the Right Rev Donald F Harvey... grateful to be in the presence of the Primate who gave us coverage at great cost to himself and his Province, the Most Rev Greg Venables... to be present with our new Primate, the Most Rev Foley Beach... to be in the company of the House of Bishops here in the Anglican Network in Canada and many other bishops of ACNA... to be among friends and colleagues, partners in the gospel, from across the country and in New England. I say to you, I believe the Lord is amazing, and I also believe that he has **given us a task to do** in these days which is worthy of our lives, because "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." (Revelation 5: 12) To serve him is what we are made for – it is as the Collect says, perfect freedom, and he guarantees a harvest of fruit that will remain that is an eternal harvest. (John 15:16)

This is all **grace and gift**. None of us has deserved this. None of us has attained any of this as a result of our own strength and ministries or good planning. All is a gift from above because "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." (James 1:17) As I have pondered all these things, and my own experience in them, I have been drawn repeatedly over the last two years to 1 Corinthians 4:7 "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive that why do you boast as if you did not?"

Given all that, we have **much for which to thank the Lord**. Much has been accomplished over the past six years. We are a people who now make up one geographically huge Diocese of our province. We have a Constitution and Canons. We have policies for projects, plants and parishes and to date we now represent **71 congregations** from coast-to-coast. Along with myself and Bishop Trevor and Bishop Stephen, my dear colleagues in ministry as bishops, we are blessed to have **Bishop Ron Ferris**, who is primarily planting a church and is a tremendous resource, and we have **Bishop Malcolm Harding** who is retired but is such a blessing to us all. As of last night we now have an **Episcopal Vicar in Bishop Don**, our founding Diocesan and Moderator. We have a network of **Archdeacons and a Dean of AMMIC**. Speaking of AMMIC,

surely one of the wisest and most visionary decisions that Bishop Don, as our Diocesan and Moderator, ever made was to discern the need to raise up a **missionary bishop** who would reach out to the nations of the world who are streaming to Canada – many of whom know the Lord, many, many of whom are hungry for the Lord, and many of whom have come to Christ now. Through reaching these various people groups there is an opportunity to really impact our own nation of Canada but also to reach out to the nations of the world. Bishop Stephen is that missionary bishop and AMMIC, a key part of ANiC, is the platform for reaching the many people groups now resident here in Canada.

Not only are we **now a people** because we are in Jesus, but now in ecclesial terms we can legitimately say we are now a people, a Diocese of the Anglican Church in North America, and we want to build on what has been established.

Around March of this year, I took some **time to pray about the transition** which was soon to happen, Lord willing, whereby Bishop Don would transfer the spiritual authority from himself to me to become the next diocesan Bishop. Though overwhelmed by the thought, and in a sense terrified (which incidentally continues), there was the peace (which also continues) of believing that he who chooses “what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord”. (1 Corinthians 1:27-31) Knowing this, I was able to accept and continue to accept that he would be able to work even in and through the likes of me and us as a Diocese. I/we boast in him.

With that sense of peace, there was also a **sense of urgency**. I have been very impacted by pondering the return of Christ. Hebrews 12 says: “at that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “yet once more I will shake not only the Earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken – that is, things that have been made – in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:26-29) As I ponder what’s happening in the world, it seems to me **the shaking is going on right now** so that only what cannot be shaken can and will remain and therefore there’s a sense of urgency to establish foundations as a Diocese which will sustain us no matter how violent the shaking may be and will position us in a place whereby a glorious and huge harvest can be brought in. There is urgency.

What came to me as I prayed in those days was that I believe the Lord wants us to make certain things **marks of our life together** which would sustain us, whatever may come. Before the summer, I shared with my bishops my intention that we **set aside for at least two years any discussion about dividing into more than one diocese** so that we can concentrate as a whole diocese together on these foundations. My prayer is that these qualities or priorities might be established so that whether we become two or three or four or five diocese’s the marks or the DNA of our life together would sustain us no matter how many dioceses we may become – or how hard the shaking. Those five priorities have now been much advertised. They will continue to be for the next several years.

I am a simple kind of person and I pound away at a few things. For instance when I discovered in Psalm 138 that God has chosen to exalt above all things his name and his word and later saw on Revelation 3 in his letter to the church in Philadelphia where he said I know your works. Behold, I have set 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. “I determined that I was going to **honour the name of the Lord Jesus and uphold his word** and that is what I have sought to do and what is that is what I seek to do now as Bishop. I believe these five priorities are all about honouring the name of Jesus as Lord and upholding and honouring the word of God.

I know I’m not very creative and so I just stick with a few basic things and trust that God can inspire some of us who are creative to present and promote these priorities in creative ways without ever losing the force and the solidness of the foundation itself.

The **five foundations or priorities** are as follows:

1. Bold Witnesses
2. Biblically Grounded
3. Loving Children
4. On Mission
5. Planting and growing churches

1. **BOLD WITNESSES** – I have already acknowledged that the size of a harvest or, in my view, the smallness of a harvest for ANiC thus far across the country has been a source of some frustration and at times disappointment. I do think that probably, as a people, we wouldn’t be ready for a large harvest and so the Lord in his wisdom is holding things back. We are all about planting churches but unless we, as individuals, are equipped to share the gospel, in a way which is faithful to what the gospel is, and dare to invite people to respond, there will be no harvest. Accordingly it is my keen desire and conviction that we need to set our minds and our hearts towards training and equipping one another to know and be ready to share the good news of the gospel in a way which our family members and friends our colleagues and our neighbours can understand the good news. We must be prepared to open our mouths and speak and share the good news and then invite people to respond.

I confess I am not a big fan of the quote attributed by some to Francis of Assisi – “witness every day and when necessary use words”. This seems to imply that, simply living our lives for Christ is the best witness of all. Clearly, if our lives deny what we speak our witness is not going to be effective at all nor should it be. But the gospel has content. Paul described it as the “good deposit” (2 Timothy 1:14). Paul also made it clear that: “how shall they believe if they don’t hear” (Romans 10:14b). We need to open our mouths and speak and proclaim the good news of the gospel. Otherwise people will not know what to believe. That means you. That means me. That means the elderly. That means our children. That means the influential. And that means those of us who consider ourselves in many ways to be sidelined from influence. We all need to be equipped and we need to share the gospel.

I can imagine that there will be all manner of ministries which will grow out of this priority or division – urban evangelism, rural evangelism, pre-evangelism, English as a second language evangelism, sports clubs evangelism and so on. Apologetics, learning how to share our testimony, etc. etc. But at the heart of this priority is the training for personal

evangelism which we must and will do by God's grace. I pray that there will be a measure of gracious but firm encouragement and even pressure for all of us to learn how to do this and then to do this. We are not a club where we all can do what we want at our own level as we see fit. We are God's people who have been called to declare the excellencies of his grace so that people can believe. We will be tracking how we're doing and whether or not, having been equipped, people are sharing the Lord with others and how many are responding and how many are being baptized and how many are being "discipled" etc. etc.

2. **BIBLICALLY GROUNDED** – It was the Bible and a commitment to uphold the Scriptures which caused the realignment of Anglicanism and led to the formation of the Anglican Network in Canada and of course the whole Anglican Church in North America.

We rightly consider ourselves to be Biblical and Orthodox which is what we desire to be. But the truth is that in many ways we are still pretty weak and vulnerable in our knowledge of the Scriptures and in our capacity to be thoroughly transformed by the renewing of our minds through living in the Bible and allowing it to frame our lives. Jesus said we are to live in the word and then we'll know the truth and truth shall set us free. (John 8:31,32) Paul declared "all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction for training in righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16,17) Whatever may be our gifting – whatever God's unique call on our lives may be – Paul says necessarily it involves a deep lifelong involvement in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:17).

Paul challenged his young prodigy, Timothy, "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) "It is my hope and intention that every congregation will work very hard at helping every member of the congregation be more involved in the Bible so that our Biblical literacy grows and we are fully able "to rightly handle the word of truth." Similarly it is my hope that those who are preparing for ordained ministry will become extremely competent as those who hold accurately the word of truth, and those who are already ordained would be involved in the life-long process of becoming more and more able to open up the word of God and expound it week by week for the health of those they are charged to lead. We are very fortunate to have a new catechism which assists in the ordering of biblical truth in our thinking based on the three traditional things of the Apostles Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the 10 Commandments.

3. **LOVING CHILDREN** into the kingdom.

Many of you would be aware that in 2011 I was off sick for a few months and while away I believe the Lord confronted me particularly with his heart for children. The famous passage which is often read at the baptism of infants where Jesus was indignant when he discovered the disciples were sending parents and children away says "let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Mark 10:14,15) Similarly in Matthew 18 when Jesus was asked who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he called forth a child and said "truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3,4) Clearly Jesus is calling all of us to be childlike and humble in our awareness of our desperate need for a Saviour and to put our simple

trust in him. But he is also making it clear that children have the inside track in terms of these qualities and are not to be held away at the very time when they are the most receptive and ready to receive.

It comes as no surprise therefore that when the Angel Gabriel spoke to Zechariah about the birth of John the Baptist that he quoted from Malachi 4 “and it is he who will go as a forerunner before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17) Preparing a people – remember we are called to be a people – requires of us to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children.

At that time of weakness and vulnerability in my own life, I found myself deeply longing for us to find ways to reach children and young people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a bleak thing to be a child without the Lord. But it is so wonderful, and secure reality, to be a child with the Lord, because from then on that child is never alone and there is heaven on the horizon.

We need to work very hard at evangelizing our children – calling them to true, converted faith, being born again – and not assuming that it just automatically will happen if they grow up in the system. We need to also reach far beyond our own children and grandchildren. I believe, we are well situated for such a ministry even though many of our churches right now have very few and in some cases not even one child. We must acknowledge that that cannot continue. We must be faithful to the Lord and find ways to reach children and young people.

We necessarily also need to be involved in the protection of the unborn and also other vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, as the prospect of euthanasia grows very serious, yes here in Canada. I’m very grateful for **Anglicans for Life** which is now here also in Canada – for the Rev Georgette Forney and the Rev Vicky Hedelius. I also believe that we need to be involved in specialist ministries where there are special needs children. I’m thrilled that churches, like Good Samaritan in St John’s, Newfoundland, are learning and growing in that area so much under the leadership of Archdeacon Darrell and his wife Sarah Critch.

4. **On mission** – Survival, maintaining what we have, is no small task and in and of itself that typically occupies all the energy and thinking that we have. As Anglicans, because we have a whole system of liturgy and corporate life which is wonderful, it is entirely possible that we can do all those things and feel that therefore we are fulfilling the call of God. But the fact is the only reason the Lord leaves us here in this world is because he has called us – we didn’t call him – and appointed us to go and bear fruit. We are to be a people who are strategic and missional and always planning, praying, working towards reaching and caring for the very people who are outside the circle of the church and in many cases are showing no interest at all in what we have to offer. I believe for us to be on mission means to be missional locally and also to work very hard at engaging in the global mandate to make disciples of all nations. This takes work and planning. We are to see ourselves as an army of strangers and pilgrims in a foreign land who are like paratroopers who have been dropped behind enemy lines but with a mission to reach this world and, in our case this continent, with the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

5. **Planting and Growing Churches** – It is clear that God’s intention to reach this world for Christ is by the establishment of the church and churches as the platforms through which the gospel goes forward. We have made a good start and there are church plants across the country but we have a very long ways to go as we seek to plant churches in every major community in Canada. I think it can be said that although we have participated in Anglican 1000 and certainly have seen church plants in AMMIC it is not been as serious a priority in our life as it needs to be. Every congregation to matter how large or how small needs to be thinking about church planting.

Now there are three things I want to say about these five priorities:

1. First of all, like everything else with God, what he calls us to is **absolutely impossible** for us to do. We cannot make any of these things happen. “Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1) It has struck me how absolutely impossible this is and therefore how completely important it is that we devote ourselves first to **prayer**. One of the first things that I have done is appoint the **Rev Garth Hunt** to be my Bishop’s Prayer Support Chaplain. When possible, I am asking him to travel with me so that he can cover all the meetings etc. that I’m involved with in intercessory prayer. I’m asking him also particularly to give teaching and much encouragement and prayer towards revival. I believe the Lord has stirred in his heart and given him a message which we desperately need to hear.

There many things which have not been mentioned even in the five priorities. For instance **worship** is at the center of our life. Clearly to declare the excellencies of his glory means that worship and the sacraments need to be at the vital center of every congregation all of our lives. It also is the case that we all need care and shepherding and pastoring and encouragement and help. **Pastors and their families need care as well**. One of the things, we as bishops are working on is to try to enhance the level of involvement and care we have with and for our clergy and their families. To do this we are looking to our archdeacons and Dean of AMMIC to spend as much time as possible with each of the clergy and their region into some sort of regular way. **The Rev Dr Brent Stiller** has accepted my appointment as Bishop’s Clergy Support Chaplain to help facilitate this important work.

2. I am counting on the fact that our **clergy will welcome** each contact these fine **archdeacons** will make with them and will find the contact encouraging and life-giving and supportive of their lives and ministry. I confess in previous days when I was called by the Archdeacon I didn’t always welcome that because I was suspicious of the agenda that I thought might be there. We are being very transparent and simply want to assist and encourage but also challenge our clergy and their families to grow.
3. So far, in terms of the five priorities I have **appointed five chairs**, actually in one case a couple so **six chairs** for five priorities, to give leadership under my leadership so that we in reality move forward. Around your tables are some prayer cards which are a kind of **bookmark** which I hope you will take, put in your Bible or prayer book or on your fridge or something like that. You’ll see that where the five priorities are listed it says “Pray that the Lord will make our five priorities a transformational reality in the life of every ANiC congregation.” We will not be satisfied if we are simply inspired. John said let us not love in word alone but in deed and in truth. So we are looking to these chairs to help each

congregation across the country by providing encouragement, support and resources so that we can, in time, move forward on all five priorities.

May I say I know that no Congregation will be able to do all five at the same time, but, over the next few years, you can count on the fact that we will address all five in every congregation no matter how small or how large. Each of these leaders is passionate about the area to which they have been asked to give leadership. They have a track record of involvement in this area and are therefore well qualified to work with others towards helping us grow. Each of them will be choosing a committee or team to work with them which will represent the various geographical regions as well as AMMIC. The five chairs are:

Bold Witnesses – the Reverend Ray David Glenn

Biblically Grounded – the Reverend Canon George Sinclair

Loving Children – Kimberly and Jeremy Graham

On Mission – Mr Claus Lenk and

Planting and Growing Churches – the Reverend Alastair Sterne

Dear friends, I have a few **final concluding remarks** to make:

The **Lord is doing an amazing, new thing** in these days. Though there is much turmoil in the world and in the church, it is evident here in North America that there is a work of the Holy Spirit which is stirring the church. It certainly causes one to be hopeful and encouraged in the prayer for revival. Among the things which are evidently happening is a growing together of various streams of the body of Christ which in the past have been very much divided. Just a couple of weeks ago Bishop Don and I were part of a symposium and dialogue which was between the Anglican Church in North America and the **Lutheran Church – Canada** (Missouri Synod). In the past that would have been impossible but the excitement and joy and enjoyment of one another's fellowship and serious dialogue is very clear.

Here, in this event, we have already welcomed **Bishop Todd Atkinson** and 12 deacons of the Via Apostolica. It is evident that the Lord is working in the Church, drawing many to the Canterbury Trail. We have so much to learn from these dear new friends who have fallen in love with the Anglican way and are so successful in raising up a network of young leaders to plant churches. It is a joy to begin to connect together in what we have described as a Common Cause partnership and see how the Lord will use it to strengthen us both together in the cause of the gospel. I have commissioned Archdeacon Darrell Critch to work with our House of Bishops in helping promote and encourage this new partnership that we describe as common cause.

In our **finances** and even where we are meeting for worship and fellowship and all manner of ministries, we continue to look to the Lord step-by-step. You may have seen a summary statement of the finances. One of the great joys of the end of our last financial year which is June 30 was that we ended the year retiring entirely the deficit of some three years and entered into our financial year in the black. I know this is a great joy to Bishop Don that his tenure as Diocesan Bishop ended in this way and it certainly is a great joy to me to begin my tenure with this church on a good financial foundation. We are so grateful to the Lord for his provision and for the generosity of people. We thank God for the tithes of each congregation

across the country which is no small thing for any church. We believe this is honoring to the Lord and is in keeping with what the Bible teaches. We are also very grateful to **Archdeacon Ron Corcoran** for his leadership as the Time to Build Campaign Coordinator and for the generosity of his home church, Church of our Lord, to release him to do this ministry. Archdeacon Corcoran went across the country - teaching biblical giving and encouraging people to give generously. The fact that we've ended in the black is very much an encouragement and a sign of the fruit which is been born as a result of Archdeacon Corcoran's hard work. We are very grateful to him.

When it comes to property most of our congregations across the country of whatever size are in a situation where they're renting or sharing property which is owned by someone else. In some very notable cases, the relationship between our congregations and their host church has been truly wonderful and there has been true Fellowship, often sharing in a ministry which is honoring to the Lord. It is also the case that there are some congregations have been able to acquire buildings and transform them into wonderful church facilities. This past spring **Holy Trinity Marlborough**, just outside Boston, after some nine years of praying were blessed in being able to purchase from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston whole campus of some four buildings including a wonderful church building which has become their home and a platform for ministry to that community.

St George's Burlington, having lost their building six years ago, are within a few weeks of entering a wonderful building which they will have erected by God's grace, having raised the substantial funds required to purchase the property. If you travel along Highway 407 by Appleby line in Burlington you will see the church towering before you in a very visible way. It is a very exciting witness to the community. Others such as St Peter and St Paul's Ottawa and Good Shepherd Vancouver are renovating and making even more useful the wonderful buildings our God has provided.

On the legal front, we are happy to report that we are pretty well done this phase of our life. **St Aidan's Community Church** remains as the one congregation which continues to deal with a very sizable financial burden as a direct result of court costs and legal fees incurred in the defense of their property. I am very grateful that the four churches in the Vancouver area which had been through similar experiences were able to give St Aidan's a sizable gift from the funds that they had left over from their legal battle. But a sizeable sum still needs to be raised. We have advertised this need in the newsletter and now during Synod the two thanksgiving offers will go towards both retiring the outstanding costs of Synod and to helping St Aidan's.

As Bishop I am very eager are for us as congregations to stand with one another. This is a very real need and I would like to encourage individuals and congregations to do their very best to stand with Canon Tom Carman and the good people of St Aidan's in Windsor Ontario. What is particularly startling, and therefore makes the need more urgent, is that there have been threats made against individuals and their private property which in my view must not happen. Therefore I'm eager to encourage us to rush to the aid of St Aidan's.

My final point is to say that, this day, my heart is filled with **Thanksgiving to God**:

- I thank God for the **Anglican Church in North America**, for our first primate Archbishop Robert Duncan and now his successor who is leading us so wonderfully, Archbishop Foley Beach. It is a great joy here in the Synod to have a number of ACNA bishops and their

wives who have gone to all the trouble to come to Ottawa to be with us for this historic Synod. These are dear friends, mighty men of God and wonderful partners in the gospel.

- I thank God that I'm part of a team which is our **House of Bishops**. Both Bishop Stephen and Bishop Trevor are well known to be extremely gifted, devoted men of God who are being used for the cause the gospel in amazing ways. I'm honoured to share with them in this episcopal ministry and look forward to seeing the Lord work together in the days ahead.
- I thank God that we have a team of **Archdeacons and a Dean** who are so dedicated to their task of, not only leading their own respective congregations, but caring for whole regions of clergy and congregations. This is a very special bunch and it's a joy to work together with them.
- I have the privilege, when I'm at home, of going into the office, our **National Office** in Burlington. I just want to say that I thank God for this outstanding group who make up our staff: for John MacDonald our National Director who is incredible in his capacity to help us keep all the balls in the air and establish ourselves as we have been able to; for Jessica Underdown who is our executive administrator and is well known for her cheerful presence on the phone and your capacity to keep everything going in the office; for Pat Decker our financial leader and for Jamie Wood who together administer the multitude of accounts and steward our financial resources and serve our financial committee and all of us so well. I thank God for Marilyn Jacobson who is an incredibly devoted and gifted communications officer. We are blessed to have at the office Paula Valentine who volunteers (Rosemary Greer has not been able to for some time due to an accident) and Jane and Mary Ann Masters and Pam Bales who come into the office and pray and intercede for all of ANiC. Ron Bales also comes into the office with some regularity and is available as a wonderful servant of the Lord to assist in any way which he can – and does so well.
- I am very grateful for **Canon Tom Carman** who has served so incredibly as the registrar of our diocese. I thank God for the **Rev Garth Hunt** and the **Rev Dr Brent Stiller** and as already mentioned, Archdeacon Ron Corcoran.
- I thank God for our **Chancellor** and our **ANiC Councillors** – particularly those who contributed so much on various committees. I am aware of and particularly thank God for four Councillors who are stepping down as of this Synod: three of the four have been in the ANiC Council right from the beginning of 2008: **Archdeacon Darrell Critch, Claus Lenk and Canon George Sinclair**. As you can tell all three will be turning their attention to special projects now for which I'm very grateful and **David Gibbs** has also stepped down and will be turning his attention towards a special project as well.
- I thank God for **Bishop Ron's Ferris and for his special task force** which included the Rev Mike Stewart and the Rev Dr Brent Stiller together to look at the whole area of our governance in response to a motion requesting by the Synod of 2012. Their comprehensive report has been distributed and was largely a great encouragement, as their research found, in general, that we were heading in basically the right direction. One small proposal which will be seen in the form of a motion coming to this Synod, I believe, is the removal of "**Moderator**" from the title of the diocesan Bishop. There were historical

reasons in the past as to why that seemed appropriate for our founding Diocesan Bishop but now it would seem appropriate to make this minor adjustment – which I support.

- I thank God for my **family**. Both my wife and I grew up in wonderful families where we heard the gospel and were prayed for. Now we are thrilled to be part of a family ourselves with our children and grandchildren. It is a great joy to have so many of my extended family and Judy's here at this Synod and this testimony to both our parents for the priority of the gospel in their lives. This is the octave of all Saints Day and my wife's parents and my parents are all in heaven with the Lord and we give thanks to God for them.
- Finally I conclude by saying that I'm **grateful to God** that by his grace and in his calling I am one of his children – and in the company of so many who love the Lord and are committed to the cause of the gospel. This movement is so wonderful to be a part of. Even with all the perplexities of these days, it is a joy to be alive and to labour together with you.

At **Mount Carmel** (1 Kings 18), Elijah laid the altar but then he called to God and it is God who sent the fire. In these days it is our desire to position ourselves as part of the people of God – **Now a People** – particularly by working on these **five priorities** such that we can pray... and watch... and beg the Lord to **send the fire**. My dear friend, Bishop Don, loves the song “These are the Days of Elijah” and rightly so. Let us pray that by the next time we meet – and I pray we will be gathering in **Vancouver for our next Synod in 2015** – let us pray that these five priorities would be transformational realities and mark our lives more and more. Then we will be able look back and say “**Isn't the Lord amazing!?**”

And now to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be ascribed all might, majesty, dominion and power now and forever more. AMEN

Respectfully submitted,

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