

# **“IT IS NOT ‘US’ AND ‘THEM’; NO, IT IS JUST ‘US!’”**

## **ANiC Regional Assembly**

### **2 Corinthians 8 & 9**

**April 2013**

#### **The Venerable Ron Corcoran**

As the chair of the Time to Build Campaign I now know that there are certain ways to raise money and certain ways you do not. I have absolutely no idea what these **MEN** had in mind (and I don't think they did either) when they was decided to put this billboard up to raise money for a **woman's** wall of honor at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The billboard speaks for itself.

I have a brother who is a United Church Minister in Mississauga Ontario and we often share our sermon illustrations with one another. This is one that came from him and works very well with the topic that I have been speaking about for the past several months. A seminary professor named Stanley Hauerwas has a novel idea about how Churches should receive new members. As a teacher of Christian ethics at Duke University, he has written about the Church's need for honesty and has called us to tell the truth as a "community of character." To this end, he has a modest proposal. Whenever people join the Church, Hauerwas thinks they should stand and answer four questions: **Who is your Lord and Savior?** The response: "Jesus Christ." **Do you trust in him and seek to be his disciple?** "I do." **Will you be a faithful member of this congregation?** The answer: "I will." Finally, one last question: **What is your annual income?** To all of you who are new Rectors or Church Planters, try it in your parishes and tell others it was part of your training.

My topic today is the same topic that I have been talking about for the past couple of months and that is the ***Time to Build Campaign***. During that time, I have travelled to a number of places and each place I go, I promise to return and bring greetings from your brothers and sisters in ANiC that are ministering in other parts of this country. So this morning, I bring you greetings from:

ST. HILDA'S CHURCH, OAKVILLE, ONT.  
CELEBRATION CHURCH, BARRIE, ONT.  
CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, ST. CATHARINES, ONT.  
ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, LOWVILLE, ONT.  
CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY, HAMILTON, ONT.  
ST. CHAD, TORONTO, ONT.  
CHURCH OF THE WAY, WASAGA BEACH, ONT.  
CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, TORONTO, ONT.  
ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH, WINDSOR, ONT. (MAY 7<sup>TH</sup> APPEAL)  
CORNERSTONE CHURCH, SARNIA, ONT.  
FAITH ANGLICAN CHURCH, EMBRUN, ONT.  
BLACKBURN HAMLET COMMUNITY CHURCH, OTTAWA, ONT.  
ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL, OTTAWA, ONT.  
ETERNAL HOPE, CARLETON PLACE, ONT.  
CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, OTTAWA, ONT.  
ST. LUKE'S, PEMBROKE, ONT.  
CHRISTCHURCH, OCEANSIDE  
CHURCH OF OUR LORD VICTORIA  
GRACE ANGLICAN IN CALGARY

As I carry out this work on behalf of our Diocese and our Bishops, I have discovered that there is some DNA left over from our previous existence. In the days gone by, there were **Parishes** and then there was the **Synod Office**. Each month the local Parish was expected to send anywhere from 18 to 26% of their income to the Diocese, so they in turn could run their ministries and support the work of the Provincial Church. From time to time, Parishes would get up in arms about the amount of apportionment they were expected to contribute. Some Parishes looked at it as a necessary tax being paid to what at times some perceived to be an absentee Lord of the Manor. As I said some of that DNA has trickled into our new organization and periodically I hear about an **'us'** and **'them.'** However, I believe that our new organization is fair and just and all it asks from every Parish is a Biblical 10% tithe and if we all participate in this endeavor, then the local Parishes will have no difficulties meeting their needs and the needs of the wider Church. Furthermore, the **DNA** of the Anglican Network in Canada is not based on a vision of maintaining the status quo of being **maintenance minded**; instead we are building a future and an organization that is **missionary minded**. However, we all need to be aware, **AND WE NEED TO HEAR THIS** that our tithes will **NOT** be enough for us to do the work we are doing now as well as carrying out the ministry of planting new Churches. We all know that just over five years ago, we started with one Bishop, one Priest, and one Church. As of April 21<sup>st</sup>, I believe that we will have 73 Churches, Plants and Projects established across this country. Our intention is to have Biblically Faithful, Gospel Sharing Anglican Churches across Canada and I believe we are well on the road to accomplishing that goal. But to reach that goal, it will require sacrifices.

I have a tiny little role to play in this endeavor and that is to convince or to persuade individuals and parishes to join the Time to Build Campaign. This is not my campaign or our Bishops' campaign or the Synod Office's campaign. No this needs to be an **ANiC** campaign and for all of us to take part in helping reach our goal of raising another \$725,000.00 by the fall of 2014. This can only be accomplished if everyone in the body of believers that makes up the ANiC does their fair share. Some may dismiss this campaign because it is only \$20.00 a month and surely they can live without my \$20.00. The reason it is only \$20.00 is that \$20.00 is really not that big a number, but if we all participate it will substantially increase our monthly cash flow and we will not have to deal with deficit financing. Individuals and Parishes need to take ownership of this endeavor. The Time to Build Campaign was re-introduced in November at our Synod in Ottawa. Since November, it has raised **\$72,629.29** but that is only with **134** identifiable donors. That brings the grand total of our campaign to **\$313,000.00** since its inception.

Some of us may be thinking that a capital campaign is not the way to go. However, I want you to know that one of the very first capital campaigns was carried out by none other than the Apostle Paul and I want to spend a few minutes looking at his capital campaign and studying what he had to say about **'giving'** and about **'grace'**, because **'giving'** and **'grace'** go together. We all need to remember that **Giving** is an act of **worship**. It is an expression of gratitude to a faithful God for all His goodness to us. Giving is not just a response to a need in the Church; it is a response of gratitude to our God who has given us more than enough.

I find it fascinating that when you combine Paul's two letters to the Church in Corinth, you have 29 chapters on various topics. He talks to us in his first letter about the foolishness of the cross, the wisdom of God, Church leadership, Church conflict, litigation, idolatry, marriage, food and idols, spiritual gifts, the unity of the body, the Lord's Supper, the great chapter on love, worship and a full chapter on the Resurrection.

The second letter can almost be described as an apologetic letter because some found his first letter to be too harsh. In this second letter he talks to us about restoring a sinner to the fellowship, the make-up of the New Covenant, living the Resurrected life, the ministry of Reconciliation and he talks of the suffering he has undergone for the sake of the Gospel both in Chapter 6 and again in Chapter 11. He defends his own ministry and he tells us about the thorn in his side and again and again he assures the Corinthians of his love for them. Because of time restraints I have presented a very general overview of these two letters.

What we should find fascinating about these 29 chapters is that, although Paul writes a full chapter on love and on the Resurrection, he sets aside **two full chapters** in his second letter (that is chapters 8 & 9) for the topic of a **capital** campaign. What we have here was one of early Church's missionaries to the Gentile world; a Church-Planter; a Theologian and a Pastor and now He has become a **Fund-Raiser** and if I may use the words for the **Mother Church-the Church in Jerusalem**. He broaches the topic of a capital campaign to help out the Church in Jerusalem, in the closing chapter of his first letter: **"Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me."** (1 Cor 16:1-4 NIV)

The second letter is written about a year later and the capital campaign in Corinth has stalled. It appears that promises of financial support had been made, but circumstances diverted their attention and they were not fulfilling their commitment. The reason for the campaign was for the Gentile Churches to help out the Church in Jerusalem as it was severely improvised. This may have come about as a result of persecution or it may be referring to the famine that was spoken about in Acts, Chapter 11 when Claudius was Emperor. The overall reason is not that important, but we do know that Paul is gravely concerned about the Churches in Jerusalem and he is calling on his brothers and sisters **'in Christ'** in the Gentile world to help their brothers and sisters **'in Christ'** in the Jewish world. He is also demonstrating to the Jewish Christians that these strange uncircumcised Gentiles who, like them have come to believe in Jesus are fellow members with them in God's new family. This is also a clear demonstration that there is no **'us'** or **'them'** in the Church of Jesus Christ, it is just **'us.'** Now in the Epistle to the Romans Paul seems to indicate that he is a bit nervous about this collection and he asks the Romans to pray that the collection will be **'acceptable'** to the Church in Jerusalem. (Ro 16:25-32) Paul wants these Churches to know that they both are defined not by their background, nor by their culture; but by their **faith in the Risen Christ**. In a moment we will see that this request from Paul to the Gentile Churches was not restricted to the Church in Corinth; no Paul is calling on all the Gentile Churches he has planted to help out with this fund-raiser. We see that in the first seven verses of Chapter 8. He tells the Corinthians that the Churches in Macedonia had given freely and those Churches were probably in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul is not only asking for money, he is going to give us a number of Biblical principles that Churches and individuals should adopt when it comes to the whole area of tithing and giving. **First**, giving is more of the matter of the heart than it is of circumstances. Everything about the circumstances in the Macedonian Churches should have suggested that because of their own needs, this was not a good time for them to worry about the needs of others. According to verse 2 in chapter 8, these Churches are

under great affliction and they also are deeply impoverished. However, in verse 3-4, Paul says that they insisted on giving far beyond their ability. In spite of their own circumstances, suffering and poverty, they wanted to help. Paul writes: **“For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people.”** Now Paul is being very clear to the Church in Corinth that these Churches were not just blindly collecting money, no, these Churches **first** of all in verse 5, gave **themselves fully to the Lord**, which is the **second** Biblical principle of giving. Before someone can give with an honest heart to the work of the Lord, their heart needs to be right with the Lord. When it is right with the Lord the generosity of the heart knows no bounds. These Macedonian Christians were in every way committed to Christ, committed to Paul’s mission, committed to the work of the Gospel and committed to Church unity. Paul says that they gave way beyond their needs and he declares that this only came about because of the **grace** of God working in their hearts. So Paul in verse 7, challenges the Corinthians to cultivate this same **grace**. He applauds them (maybe with tongue in cheek) that they excel in everything else-in faith, in speech, in knowledge; in complete earnestness and in love, but now he challenges them to **excel in giving**. Why should they excel in giving? This brings me to the **third** reason to give and that is verse 9: **“For you know that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”** God excelled in giving us His Son-there is no greater gift or sacrifice. The Churches in Macedonia took His example to heart. They recognized that giving becomes a joy when it comes out of sacrifice. When I think of **Joy**, I always think of the Epistle to the Hebrews: **“Jesus, who for the JOY set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the Father.”** (12:2) These Macedonians were so excited and filled with joy that Paul uses them as an example for other Christians and other Churches to follow. In my congregation in Victoria, I also gave a presentation on tithing and giving. One of my senior members said that he wasn’t sure about all this talk on tithing, and he recognized that I have difficult task to complete. So he said to me: *‘when I heard you were doing this job, I said to myself: ‘poor chap’*, but then to show his support for the work I am doing he wrote a cheque for \$5,000.00 for the Time to Build Campaign. I will boast about him and use him as an example as Paul boasted about the Macedonian Churches and used them as an example. I don’t care how many people call me a **‘poor chap’** if they give me a cheque along with the comment.

The **fourth** principle about giving is found in chapter 9, verses 6-7: **“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should decide in your hearts to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver.”** It is a spiritual law as well as common sense when Paul says if we only scatter a few seeds, we will only reap a small harvest. But if we sow generously, we will reap generously. Paul also tells us each one of us must decide what we are going to give and not to give it reluctantly or compulsively. The Rev. Terry Fullham the former Charismatic and Evangelical Pastor of St. Paul’s Darien, Connecticut used to say that God loves a cheerful giver, but He will take from a grouch. I am not sure if that is true. What is important I think is that people give not as a legalistic requirement but give in response to God’s love as revealed in Jesus. Giving is about making a choice-a deliberate choice. Yesterday, I mailed a letter along with the Time to Build pledge form to 133 clergy in the ANiC family. If you have already pledged, you will not receive one except in error. But for those who have not yet made a commitment to this campaign this is your opportunity

to do so. I am hoping that the clergy in turn will make copies of those forms and distribute them to the members of their congregation. I have been a Rector for almost 30 years and I know how many things compete for our attention, but this has to be a high priority if we are going to accomplish the work that is necessary in ANiC. Yes, I am looking for your help, in fact, I am pleading for your help very much like Paul pleaded for the help of the Church in Corinth. It is a 20 month commitment for \$20 a month. Of course we will gladly receive any other gift be it smaller or larger. This campaign has to do with faithfully proclaiming the Gospel. My fellow colleagues and brothers and sisters and 'in Christ': **THIS IS NOT ABOUT 'US' AND 'THEM', NO, IT IS JUST ABOUT "US!"**

For those of you who are here and want to make a commitment today, I and a couple of helpers will be available at noon to help fill out the forms and collect them and I will ensure that they get to Synod headquarters. I would like to leave here on Saturday with more than a small handful of forms completed. So please help me.

There is no better way to finish today than with a slight modification of Paul's final words in chapter nine to the Church in Corinth: **"This service that you perform (\$20 for 20 months) is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people, but it is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. (And I do thank God for the progress we have made so far.) Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift."** (2 Cor 9:12-15) And thank you for the Grace of listening and may God now give to us the gifts of 'giving' and the 'grace' that goes with that gift.