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Follow-up letter from Bishop Donald Harvey

Dear ANiC members and AEC colleagues,

By now you will have read the Report issued by the Panel of Reference on the situation in New Westminster – as well as the many responses to that report, including our own.

My understanding of the Windsor Process is that the Primates called for the formation of the Panel of Reference and for the Panel to make recommendations to the Archbishop of Canterbury “on behalf of the Primates”. It will be up to the Primates to accept or reject the recommendations made when they meet in February 2007 – just as they decided which parts of the Windsor Report were acceptable and which were not.

Our commitment has always been to act in submission to the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury to whom we are deeply indebted for their tireless efforts to protect and care for the faithful parishes in Canada.

In reading the many responses to the Panel’s report, I’m sure you were struck, as I was, by the stark contrast in reactions. While Archbishop Hutchison and the Diocese of New Westminster welcomed the Panel’s Report, Archbishops Gomez and Venables were clearly distressed. While some see the report as the basis of reconciliation, healing and unity, others see it as further evidence that the existing structures of the Anglican Communion were not designed to deal with a crisis of this depth and magnitude – a crisis that goes to the heart of Anglican identity and doctrine.

On the surface the Report seems eminently reasonable. But dig a little deeper and you’ll quickly find serious problems. At the core, the Panel failed to deal with the fundamental problem and, in doing so, failed to fulfill the mandate given them by the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

As I see it, these are the key problems with the Report and its recommendations.

1. Communion

The Report rejects our assertion that the faithful parishes of New Westminster cannot remain in full communion with the worldwide Anglican Communion while remaining subject to the jurisdiction of a diocese that is not in full communion. While the Report claims that some parts of the Communion still recognize this diocese, Archbishop Gomez replies that many Primates have specifically declared they are *not* in communion with the Diocese of New Westminster, so the diocese is not in *full* communion with *the Church of England throughout the world*.

Many of the Primates, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, have made a point of stating they recognize and are in communion with the Anglican Network in Canada and its members. So, it seems that, although we do not currently have “legal” jurisdiction, we do have communion. Meanwhile, the Diocese of New Westminster has jurisdiction but is not in full communion.

“However one describes it,” Archbishop Gomez states, “the situation is clear and unprecedented – the province of which they are part, as a result of the action of the diocese of which they are part, are currently unable to participate in the Instruments of Communion.”

Next to remaining faithful to Scripture and to the established doctrines of the Anglican Church, remaining in communion is our most cherished desire.

The panel also takes a different view of the crisis in New Westminster by describing it as a *temporary breakdown in relationships*. For members of the Anglican Network in Canada, it is about much more than that. While we all pray that there will be clear repentance and restoration, the evidence from the past number of years has been exactly the opposite. In fact, the diocese seems to be increasingly entrenched in its position to proceed unilaterally with same sex blessings despite the Windsor Report declaring these actions “against the formally expressed opinions of the Instruments of Unity” constituting “action in breach of the legitimate application of the Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it”. We do not believe the Primates see the diocesan and Canadian positions as a “temporary” breakdown of relationships, but rather, as a serious and unacceptable threat to the Christian faith and the Anglican Communion.

2. Jurisdiction

The Report suggests that you cannot divide jurisdiction (the territory, rights and duties of a bishop) as requested by the Network and the faithful parishes in New Westminster. However, Archbishop Gomez makes a compelling case for the fact that, by the Report’s own description of diocesan jurisdiction, the present bishop in New Westminster has blatantly *failed* to exercise proper

jurisdiction; he has both failed to uphold Anglican orthodoxy and, rather than being a representative of unity in the Communion, he has deliberately fostered disunity.

In light of the deliberate disregard for the exercise of proper diocesan jurisdiction in New Westminster and the failure of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) to intervene, the ACC is further undermining the current understanding of jurisdiction.

The Report also failed to address the fact that jurisdiction is, in fact, already divided in parts of Canada. For example, Archbishop Terry Buckle exercises full jurisdiction over a parish that is physically (geographically) in the diocese of Caledonia. This is an arrangement that is done with complete goodwill between the bishops. In addition, the Bishop Ordinary oversees Anglicans in the Armed Forces across Canada, without regard to diocesan boundaries. Finally, the Anglican Church of Canada recently approved a new Aboriginal bishop that will have jurisdiction over Anglicans throughout Canada, without regard to the diocesan boundaries. In the U.K. there are “flying bishops” that exercise jurisdiction over parishes in another bishop’s diocese. Thus, it is clear that jurisdiction can be ceded where there is a will – particularly where there is goodwill. To reject the request for jurisdiction from ANiC indicates a lack of will, not of ability.

Like Archbishop Gomez and Archbishop Venables, I believe it is time for new approaches. Doctrinal innovation of the magnitude demonstrated in the Diocese of New Westminster necessitates innovation in Anglican structures and protocols.

3. Adequate protection

We are grateful that the Panel clearly acknowledges the litany of systematic abuse inflicted on the parishes and clergy in New Westminster – from the summary dismissal of a faithful priest to locking a congregation out of its church building.

The sole purpose for the Panel of Reference was to recommend solutions for providing adequate protection for parishes and priests made vulnerable by their biblically-faithful stand in the face of “a hostile bishop” – or even provinces.

Has the Panel succeeded in meeting this objective?

Sadly, no.

In essence the report recommends the sheep return to the care of the wolf.

The Report recommends essentially the same scheme of shared episcopal ministry (SEM) recommended by the Canadian House of Bishops, but with some additional safeguards. Under SEM, the bishop delegates limited authority to another bishop, but we have repeatedly explained why that model was inadequate to provide the needed protection for our vulnerable and harassed parishes and clergy, particularly in New Westminster.

Archbishop Venables states, "It is now tragic to receive a report that fails to address the crisis in New Westminster adequately. It simply does not reflect the depth nor the severity of the crisis that has been precipitated by Michael Ingham's actions... It is unrealistic and most unwise to send Biblically committed clergy and congregations back to a synod and bishop who have so tragically abandoned the foundations of the faith. These faithful clergy and people need the jurisdiction of a bishop who is fully committed to Biblical faith and Anglican tradition and practice."

What is at stake?

Nothing less than the soul of our beloved Anglican Church – our doctrine, our traditions and our practices. The Report fails to recognize that the "Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it" (TWR s. 143) is at stake.

SEM, even with the additional safeguards set out in the Report is really a reception model. It allows the blessing of same sex unions to continue unabated, thus ignoring the call of the Windsor Report for a moratorium, and suggests no consequences to any bishop who acts unilaterally and contrary to the faith, the Instruments of Unity and the "bonds of affection" of the Anglican Communion.

While some talk appeasingly of reconciliation and unity, they refuse to come to the only place where reconciliation and unity can be found – at the foot of the cross of Christ. Only when we as individuals and as a church repent of our willful disregard for the authority of Scripture, our rejection of the deity of Christ and our disdain for God's exclusive means of salvation through Christ can we find reconciliation with God and with each other. Christian unity is only possible in Christ. There can be no "unity in diversity" when the diversity is of doctrine.

The Windsor Report and the Dromantine Communiqué clearly set out the basis for reconciliation, calling those who have left the faith to turn back, repent and recommit themselves to unity in the Communion. Unfortunately, some prefer to ignore this call for repentance, attempting to lay responsibility for broken communion at the feet of those who, in fact, have remained faithful both to the Communion and to the historic doctrine of the Church.

Because of its failure to keep faith with the Communion and its rejection of church doctrine, the Anglican Church of Canada was pointedly asked to withdraw from the Anglican Consultative Council. Our Primate is not currently welcome to sit with all of the global Primates at events normally reserved for Primates, such as this year's

consecration of the new Primate for South East Asia, Archbishop John Chew. Responsibility for the crisis in our Church must be placed where it belongs – with the Diocese of New Westminster which willfully disregarded the clear teaching of the Church and the ACC which refuses to challenge this Diocese and has even endorsed their actions.

What happens next?

Already two Primates have responded to the Panel's report. In February, the Primates meet and we expect this will be on their agenda. We wait submissively for their response and direction.

We are humbled that these Primates who are burdened with pressing challenges in their own provinces have shown such concern for the plight of faithful Anglicans in Canada. They have understood that this affront to the Church and to the Faith cannot go unchallenged. We thank God for the faithful leaders in our Communion who are standing firm for truth.

It is so good to know that we in Canada do not stand alone. While we are tempted to see ourselves as a minority on our own continent, biblically-faithful Anglicans are a majority in the Communion.

Yours for the Kingdom,

Bishop Donald

The Rt Reverend Donald F Harvey
Moderator – Anglican Network in Canada