



Open Letter from the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) Regarding the Archbishop of Canterbury's Panel of Reference Report Released October 13, 2006

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Panel of Reference released their "Report on the Diocese of New Westminster" (www.aco.org/commission/reference/docs/report_october.pdf). The report includes recommendations, which according to the "functions of the Panel" are directed to "the Primates, dioceses and provincial and diocesan authorities concerned". Already, the provincial and diocesan authorities concerned (Archbishop Andrew Hutchison and the Diocese of New Westminster), as well as some Primates (Archbishops Drexel Gomes and Gregory Venables) have begun to respond.

The question the Windsor Report asked is: Does a scheme for Episcopal Oversight provide adequate protection for the parishes in serious theological dispute with their dioceses? We are grateful that the Panel Report twice quotes section 151 of the *Windsor Report* which makes clear that 'adequacy' is defined by those who are vulnerable— "*this oversight must be sufficient to provide a credible degree of security on the part of the alienated community, so that they do not feel at the mercy of a potentially hostile leadership*". However, it is unfortunate that despite this recognition in the report, the recommendations fall short of providing such adequate protection as recognized and articulated by Archbishops Gomez and Venables in their statements today.

We are also very grateful to the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury for their ongoing efforts to protect and support parishes and clergy made vulnerable by their biblically-faithful stand in dioceses and provinces that have rejected the doctrine of the church. The Primates first called for the Panel of Reference in February 2005, as a matter of *urgency* "to protect the integrity and legitimate needs of groups in serious theological dispute with their diocesan bishop" in such dioceses and provinces. Because the doctrine of the church is at stake, adequate protection for those who remain faithful is of vital concern to every Anglican.

The crisis was initiated in 2002 when the Diocese of New Westminster voted unilaterally to authorize the blessings of same sex unions in defiance of all four Instruments of Unity. A number of faithful parishes in New Westminster declared themselves in impaired Communion with their bishop and appealed to the global Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury for alternative Episcopal oversight. As Archbishop Venables said, "These faithful clergy and people need the jurisdiction of a bishop who is fully committed to Biblical faith and Anglican tradition and practice". Archbishop Gomez's recognition that "the Bishop of New Westminster is not 'in fact' exercising proper jurisdiction", supports the faithful stand of those parishes who appealed. In 2003, the Primates declared that the actions of New Westminster, as well as those of the Episcopal Church in the US (ECUSA), had "torn the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level" and first called for the "*adequate provision for Episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities . . . in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates*" (www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/36/25/acns3633.html).

In 2004, the Lambeth Commission on Communion issued the Windsor Report (www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004), which was considered by the Primates in February 2005 at Dromantine, Ireland. The Dromantine Communiqué called upon the diocese of New Westminster, the Anglican Church of Canada and ECUSA, to enact a moratorium on same sex blessings and to express regret both for the decisions made and how they were made. (www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/39/00/acns3948.cfm)

Recognizing that the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada had passed a motion in 2004 to “affirm the integrity and sanctity of” same sex unions, the Primates also asked the Anglican Church of Canada and ECUSA to voluntarily withdraw from participation in the Communion until the next Lambeth Conference in 2008. During that time, they were asked to consider whether they were “willing to be committed to the inter-dependent life of the Anglican Communion understood in the terms set out in” the Windsor Report. The request to withdraw was endorsed and upheld by the Anglican Consultative Council in June 2005.

Despite the gracious clarity and direction of the leaders of the global Communion, the Anglican Church of Canada has done nothing to discipline the bishop of New Westminster for his unilateral decision to proceed with same sex blessings, nor for the failure to enact a moratorium as called for by the Windsor Report. At the same time, there has been a distressing pattern of harassment of faithful parishes in New Westminster, again without sanction from the Canadian Church. It is a matter of public record that the diocese has locked a congregation out of their building and fired the orthodox wardens and volunteers, summarily dismissed a priest, ‘terminated’ a mission days before Christmas, and brought charges against the clergy of the protesting parishes.

The Anglican Network in Canada is committed to being faithful to Scripture and to working in submission to the Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury. We have been very grateful for the ongoing support of the Primates and particularly for the Global South Primates Kigali Communiqué (www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/comments/kigali_communique/) in which they said they were “...greatly encouraged by Network Dioceses and all of the other congregations and communities of faithful Anglicans in North America. In addition, we commend the members of the Anglican Network in Canada for their commitment to historic, biblical faith and practice. We value their courage and consistent witness.”

Today’s statements by Archbishop Gomez (www.anglicannetwork.ca) and Archbishop Venables (www.anglicannetwork.ca) bring further clarity and encouragement to those in ANiC who continue to uphold Anglican doctrine and teaching. We are extremely grateful for the bold and courageous statements these two respected and highly esteemed Communion leaders have made. We look forward to receiving statements from other Communion leaders in the days ahead as well as to the Primates’ meeting next February when they will discuss the Panel’s report as a group.

Archbishop Gomez’s suggestion of the Anglican Church of Canada ceding jurisdiction to a ‘college’ of bishops in the Province as an interim measure is worth considering. This could be one way of providing adequate protection for those faithful parishes in New Westminster while the Anglican Church of Canada considers whether they are “willing to be committed to the inter-dependent life of the Anglican Communion”.

We call upon the Anglican Church of Canada to prayerfully consider the consequences of continued disregard for the spirit and teaching of the Scriptures which is our heritage as an Anglican Communion. Anglican brothers and sisters have upheld this apostolic tradition with its doctrines – even at the cost of their own lives.

Our prayer is that all of us in the Anglican Church of Canada will demonstrate true repentance, embrace Biblical teaching, and restore unity in the Communion.

“BUT IF NOT”, we are committed to ensuring faithful Canadian Anglicans are able to stay with the Anglican Communion and uphold the gospel within the Anglican tradition.

Original Signed by:

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