

Church Times article (March 13, 2009)

By the [Right Rev Donald Harvey](#), Moderator, Anglican Network in Canada

It was a great privilege for me to attend part of the recent Church of England General Synod and participate in a fringe event. As a retired member of the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, I have attended many synods. Few have been as convivial.

One notable exception was the November 2008 synod of the fledging Anglican Network in Canada, for which it is now my delight to serve as Moderator. This synod was characterized by unity in the Spirit, the joy of the Lord, and an eagerness to get on with the mission of proclaiming the Good News of salvation through Christ.

Although it was our first synod and there was much work to be done in setting up foundational processes and canons, well over half of our time together was devoted to prayer, praise, ministry of the Word, and reports from the member parishes of how they were ministering in their communities. For many of these parishes, their short time in the Anglican Network in Canada had not been easy. But without exception, they all expressed the joy and freedom they were experiencing – even in the midst of trials.

God has indeed been good. Since the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) was launched in November 2007 with two small churches, two priests and two bishops, we have grown to comprise 73 priests and deacons, three bishops and 28 parishes, with total average Sunday attendance of 3500.

That initial growth has come from Canadian Anglicans who have felt conscience-bound to align with a Biblically faithful Church while still retaining their full Anglican identity. In recent years tens of thousands have left the Anglican Church of Canada – and Anglicanism. The Anglican Network in Canada now provides an option for those who wish to remain Anglican. Our prayer and aim is that our future growth will come primarily from reaching out to the millions of unchurched Canadians through evangelism, church planting and discipleship.

Unfortunately, we are currently dealing with unnecessary and costly distractions due to litigation over church property. Despite our repeated requests to seek mutually advantageous settlements through negotiation or mediation, four Anglican Church of Canada dioceses have forced ANiC parishes into court. The recent Primates' Communique calling for gracious restraint and mediation gave us hope, but so far the Anglican Church of Canada has insisted on pursuing disputes in the secular courts.

It was so heartening to have been at the Church of England synod at which so much of the discussion revolved around the uniqueness of Christ and the Church's mission to evangelise. My earnest desire is that such discussions will once again be warmly received in the established Anglican structures in North America – rather than being met with hostility. When that day comes, there will be no need for the Anglican Network in Canada and the proposed orthodox North American province, the Anglican Church in North America.

The growing gulf between the orthodox and the liberals in North American Anglicanism cuts to the very essence of our faith. It is not trivial as so many wish to portray it. Those of us who have left the established structures in North America have done so in order to remain in the Communion and true to Anglican teaching. The irony is that we have had to leave in order to stay – leave the increasingly renegade North American structures in order to stay in the mainstream of global and historic Anglican orthodoxy.

We deeply value our Anglican heritage and want to faithfully preserve what has been entrusted to us by our forebears, so we can pass it on, intact and unaltered, to future generations. Remaining true to historic Christian doctrine and Anglican tradition has meant that we have had to make gut-wrenching, heart-breaking decisions. To be faithful to the founding principles of the Anglican Church of Canada, we have had to seek refuge outside its structure.

While the Church's teaching on sexuality is currently in the spotlight, it is only the tip of the theological iceberg – the most visible aspect of the innovations that have taken hold in the established North American Churches. It is often forgotten that the Bishop of New Westminster formally approved the blessing of same sex unions in June 2002, more than one year before the consecration of Bishop Gene Robinson in the Episcopal Church.

Many "traditional" Canadian Anglicans have suffered eviction from their buildings, inhibition, and accusations of abandonment of the ministry. Hostile bishops and dioceses have taken orthodox clergy, lay leaders and parishes to court to wrest away buildings for which the dioceses have no use. Nine ANiC parishes have been forced before the courts as the dioceses attempt to strip them of their long-time church buildings.

In the next few months, court cases will be heard in the Dioceses of Niagara (March 11), Huron (April 6), and New Westminster (beginning May 25). These court proceedings are costly, and in some cases vicious – with the diocese seeking to impose large financial burdens not just on the parish corporations, but also on individual clergy and wardens. The scorched earth tactics have not even spared internationally renowned theologian Dr. J.I. Packer, who was accused

and “convicted” of abandoning the ordained ministry by Bishop Michael Ingham last spring.¹

We are heartened, however, to hear that the Primates meeting in Egypt clearly acknowledged the depth of the crisis in the Communion, and recognized that there are now, in fact, two distinct religions within Anglicanism. This is exactly what we have struggled with in North America for much of the last decade. While we see all of Scripture as the authoritative Word of our unchanging God and test new revelation by its consistency with Scripture, “liberal” Anglicanism sees Scripture as limited by the cultural context in which it was written, and so subordinate to purported “new revelation”.

What does the future hold? Our intention is to continue to build the Anglican Church in North America, reuniting the roughly 100,000 displaced Anglicans who have been forced out of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church in the US, as a result of the innovations and intolerance of Biblical faithfulness. While we, in the Anglican Church in North America, have challenges ahead, our common commitment to Scripture and missionary purpose – to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and His transforming love – combined with evident good will and unity in the Spirit, give us great hope for the future of this new province-in-formation.

For more information:

- See the Anglican Network in Canada website – www.anglicanetwork.ca
- See detailed reports on innovations and hostile actions in North America:
 - o [Report on the Episcopal Church](#)
 - o [Report on the Anglican Church of Canada](#)

¹ In seeking to remain faithful to historic Biblical Christianity and Anglicanism, and not participate in a “breach of the legitimate application of the Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it” (§143 *The Windsor Report*), Dr. Packer ran afoul of Bishop Ingham. He, along with the other clergy in North America who have been accused of abandoning the ministry, are the ones who remain faithful to Communion teaching, particularly the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10, and to the Communion processes for resolution of the global crisis. However, the Anglican Church of Canada seeks to remove these godly clergy from their churches, and from Anglicanism, before the Communion can address the “tear in the fabric” of our fellowship.