

Dear Bishops of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto,

Greetings in Christ. As future leaders within the Anglican Church of Canada, we have taken keen interest in reviewing and assessing the decisions being made within the Anglican Church of Canada with regard to the teachings and practices of our Church. Your proposed response to the House of Bishops' 2007 statement on sexuality and the matter of committed same-sex relationships has been received by the undersigned with a degree of confusion, frustration and anxiety. This has prompted our letter of response to your proposal.

In this letter, we articulate what we understand to be the means by which the Anglican Communion has engaged in a common life of the discernment of Scripture. We suggest that your proposal departs from the mutual discernment of Scripture that has until recently, shaped the common life of this Church. We then point to some disturbing developments we have witnessed as this means of ordering our common life together has been jeopardized. Finally, in light of our understanding of the Bishops' role and function in both the past and present, we submit that it is certainly not a pastoral response for conservatives who will be further sidelined, their sense of having a place in the Anglican Church of Canada imperilled by this proposed action that goes against their understanding of the church's common reading of Scripture. We submit this response to your call for consultation in the hopes that you will reassess the potential fruits of your proposed action and come to see that such a proposal cannot in fact "strengthen the pastoral care of *all* Anglicans."

We emphasize the word 'all' as we wish to call attention to the fact that the implications of the actions taken in this matter by the Diocese of Toronto are in fact not local; rather they impact the ability of all local Anglican Churches in all Provinces of this Communion to witness to the gospel. It was for this reason that (until the last 10-15 years), the member Churches of the Anglican Communion (and prior to this the Church of England) engaged in communal discernment of Scripture. The process of discernment was ordered by the notion of interdependence between member Churches in which each Church limited its teachings and practices to those agreed upon by the whole Anglican Communion as articulated by general synods and by the Lambeth Conference (as of 1867). For the bishops of the Communion, it was upon this mark of agreement between the members of the whole Church that signified the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church's decision-making.

It is neither unity for unity's sake, nor truth for truth's sake that such a polity, as described above, enables. Rather this polity has been the *via media* by which the Anglican Communion has been able to maintain the peace, unity and order of the Church necessary for the constant communal discernment of God's Word and thus for renewal and reform. It is only by maintaining such an order that true diversity can be allowed to flourish with equality. Where Churches undertake autonomous *action* (acting apart from the decisions made by the whole Church {we do not imply here that vigorous debate cannot be heard and facilitated}), the resulting disruption to the order of the Church creates confusion and division and simply obscures the gospel witness of all Churches involved. Furthermore, such autonomous action does not facilitate pastoral care. On one hand, it alienates those who seek to obey the teaching of the whole Church to which they belong. Many of these individuals feel they cannot, in conscience, remain a part of a Church that acts against its own promises (made as members of a Communion) to maintain the 'mind of the Church' as expressed in synodical gatherings; and so these individuals have left various dioceses or Churches citing a lack of inclusiveness and care for their theological position. On the other hand, the fall out from this 'walking apart' has

resulted in distrust of those who seek to remain committed to the teachings of the whole Church but who seek to do so from within the Churches that wish to act autonomously. These individuals are often treated with suspicion and a lack of equality because those in authority over these individuals fear they will leave and/or take members of their current congregation with them. And finally, in such an air of hostility, those to whom we seek to give care are caught in political and ideological crossfire which appears to those to whom we witness, as the fruit of another corrupt human political organization.

As members of the next generation of the Anglican Church in Canada and more particularly of its pastoral and academic leadership, we believe it our duty, both to our own generation and to our 'elders,' to signify our belief, garnered through prayer, experience, and study of Scripture, history, and theology, that acting autonomously in this matter will compromise the present and future vocation of the whole Church in effectively witnessing to the gospel. Thus we implore you to listen to our request to maintain the teachings and practices of 2007 General Synod and the 1998 and 2008 Lambeth Conferences as it is evident that the theological teachings to which you are opening the doors are not consistent with the biblical, historical and ecclesiological convictions of many within both this diocese and within the wider Church.

In the hope that as bishops responsible to the whole people of this diocese, and to the unity of the whole Anglican Communion, we, the undersigned, further request that you be willing to consider holding a meeting with the 'Pastoral Visitors' as mentioned in the Primates' Communiqué and with those individuals and groups within the diocese that believe we must hold to the teaching of the whole Anglican Communion prior to making any decision to implement your proposal.

In Christ,

Jeff Boldt
Robert Porter
Katie Silcox