

April 11, 2008

An Open letter to the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

We are writing to you as members of the Anglican Church of Canada to express our deep concerns about the actions of some of the Bishops, most especially the Bishop of Ottawa in the appointment as incumbent of a female priest married to another woman, and the Bishops of Ottawa, Niagara and Montreal in assenting to votes on the blessing of same-sex civil marriages.

Our first concern is that theology is being changed by actions rather than allowing theology to inform actions. We have not resolved as a Church to bless same-sex unions nor to ordain those living in same-sex unions. Regardless of the individual circumstances, the appointment in Ottawa demonstrates an affirmation of these unions far beyond anything yet decided by the Church or allowed by the canons. Canon XVIII warns against “teaching or advocating doctrines contrary to those accepted by the Anglican Church of Canada.” Are we to understand that by the Bishop of Ottawa’s actions we now advocate such unions as suitable for the clergy of this Church? Let us be clear in our theology and actions.

Our second concern is that such actions jeopardize our place within the Anglican Communion. The Windsor Report states, “...that actions to move towards the authorization of such rites in the face of opposition from the wider Anglican Communion constitutes a denial of the bonds of Communion” (TWR, 141). Quoting again from The Windsor Report, “The Communion has also made its collective position clear on the issue of ordaining those who are involved in same gender unions and this has been reiterated by the primates through their endorsement of the 1998 Lambeth Resolution” (TWR, 127). In the face of The Windsor Report’s conclusion that they could not “advise the legitimising or blessing of same-sex unions” (TWR, 137) our bishops should not act in a way that legitimises such unions. Although the St. Michael Report asserts that, from a Canadian perspective, this should not be a Communion-breaking issue it is clear that such actions will be seen by the wider Church as a “denial of the bonds of Communion.” Is this your intention?

We request that you address this process of gradualism - changing the Church’s theology by unchallenged action, rather than by intentional discernment and genuinely inclusive theological work.

Please be assured of our prayers for you in your meetings and in the high calling each of you have received.

In Christ,

Roger L. Spack,
Secretary, on behalf of Anglican Essentials Federation