



**Anglican Network in Canada NEWS RELEASE**

## **Parishes ask court to clarify parish trustees' responsibilities**

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**Vancouver** – Four Vancouver-area Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) parishes are asking the courts to clarify their trustees' responsibilities in response to hostile action taken by a diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada.

On August 26, 2008, the Diocese of New Westminster informed two of the four parishes – St. Matthew's in Abbotsford and St Matthias and St Luke's in Vancouver – that Bishop Michael Ingham had dismissed the duly elected wardens and trustees of the parish corporations and had appointed his own parish officers. According to their press release, these actions were taken to regain "control of the parishes", which includes control of the properties and buildings. The diocese also caused the bank accounts of both parishes to be frozen. These accounts contained monies collected from members of the congregations who have had little or no relationship with the diocese for more than six years.

Letters from the Diocese to parishioners indicated that it likely will take similar action against the other two ANiC parishes – St John's (Shaughnessy) and Church of the Good Shepherd (both in Vancouver). Earlier letters from the Diocese demanded clergy leave the church buildings and suggested parishioners who supported their clergy should follow.

"The fundamental question to be ultimately determined is whether the trustees of the parish hold the property "in trust" for the diocese or for the parish congregation. However, at this time, we are simply asking the court to clarify the trustees' responsibilities until this larger question can be settled," says Cheryl Chang, ANiC Chancellor. "These trustees were elected by the people of the parish to safeguard the ministries and assets of the parish and, in that capacity, they have certain legal responsibilities. Now the Diocese is demanding they hand over the keys and assets. They need the courts to clarify their responsibilities so they can act accordingly."

The parish trustees believe the parish properties are held in trust for the benefit of the current congregations who have paid for and maintained these properties, and who are upholding traditional Anglican ministry in accordance with the founding principles of the Anglican Church of Canada (contained in the *Solemn Declaration 1893*), and the current doctrines of the global Anglican Communion. The Diocese of New Westminster, which has acted unilaterally and contrary to those principles, asserts the property is "held in trust for the ministry of the Anglican Church of Canada", whether or not it upholds historic Anglican faith and practices. Various actions are currently in the Canadian courts to determine the rightful beneficiaries of such trusts in light of the growing division in the global Anglican Communion.

"The trustees of all four parishes decided to act together in this matter since the primary issues in dispute are the same for all of them – particularly with respect to the trusts surrounding the church properties and the assets of the parishes, as well as the duties of the trustees," says Mrs. Chang. "While we have continued to seek alternate dispute resolution, the Diocese has refused to enter into a dialogue with us on the issues in dispute. We felt we had no alternative but to obtain direction from the courts – or walk away from parish properties and assets which

are owned by the parish corporations and were built and maintained by the members of these corporations, the congregations.”

All four parish congregations voted overwhelmingly in February of this year to realign with the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC), under the Episcopal authority of Bishop Donald Harvey and the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone – one of the 38 Provinces in the global Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church of Canada is also one of these 38 Provinces.

The four congregations have been in “serious theological dispute” and broken communion with the Diocese of New Westminster since June 2002, when the diocese unilaterally proceeded with same sex blessings in clear defiance of the leaders of the Anglican Communion and the belief of the overwhelming majority of Anglicans worldwide that such action is contrary to Scripture.

Since 2003, the Primates of the Anglican Communion have repeatedly asked the Anglican Church of Canada and the Diocese of New Westminster to return to Biblically faithful Anglican practice and teaching and to provide adequate episcopal oversight for dissenting parishes, but to no avail. In fact, the communion-breaking actions of the Diocese of New Westminster first sparked the current crisis and the global realignment now taking place in the Anglican Communion.

Members of the Anglican Network in Canada are committed to remaining faithful to Holy Scripture and established Anglican doctrine and to ensuring that orthodox Canadian Anglicans are able to remain in full communion with their Anglican brothers and sisters around the world.

Since it launched its ecclesial structure in November 2007 under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, ANiC has received two bishops – Donald Harvey and Malcolm Harding – and 18 parishes.

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