



Anglican Network in Canada

News release

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Parishes initiate appeal to Supreme Court of Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 12 December 2010

Vancouver, BC – After several weeks of consultation within the parishes, the Trustees of four Vancouver-area churches have instructed their legal counsel to file an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada of a BC Court of Appeal decision (November 15, 2010) which removed their right to use their church buildings. In 2008, the churches voted to affiliate with and come under the episcopal authority of the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC) in order to maintain their faith in line with the majority of global Anglicans while the Anglican Communion was in the midst of a worldwide split. The four churches are St John's (Shaughnessy), St Matthews (Abbotsford), Good Shepherd (Vancouver), and St Matthias & St Luke's (Vancouver)

While the Court of Appeal agreed with the Trustees' submissions that the trial judge was wrong on 4 significant points of law in the November 2009 BC Supreme Court decision, and it awarded an approximately \$2.2M bequest to the ANiC Church of the Good Shepherd, the court awarded beneficial ownership of the church properties to the Anglican Church of Canada Diocese of New Westminster.

"Once again, this decision to appeal was taken only after much prayer and internal consultation within the parishes," said Cheryl Chang, special legal counsel to the churches. *"When the time came to make a decision, we found there was tremendous unity among the parishes and a strong desire to continue to walk together. As churches, we believe that we are being called to stand firm for our faith, seeking to be faithful to Scripture and follow Jesus as this historic trial continues, even if it ultimately means we lose our church properties. The precedent of this case will affect many faithful Christians throughout Canada and there was a general consensus that this was not yet finished. The principles at stake are far too important to abandon."*

Appended below is the statement given in each of the four parishes today.

About the Anglican Network in Canada

The [Anglican Network in Canada](#) now numbers 40 parishes and 14 congregations in various stages of formation – with more than 3500 in church on an average Sunday. 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 fellowship with their Anglican brothers and sisters around the world.

ANiC is under the Episcopal authority of Bishop Donald Harvey and is one of 20 dioceses in the [Anglican Church in North America](#) which unites about 100,000 faithful Anglicans in over 600 churches across this continent. ANiC is also affiliated with South America's Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, one of the 38 Anglican Churches officially in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The Anglican Church in North America has been growing rapidly since its inception and has set a goal of planting 1000 new churches in five years – primarily through reaching unchurched North Americans with the life-transforming good news of Jesus Christ.

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Joint Statement from the Trustees of St John's (Shaughnessy), Church of the Good Shepherd, St Matthew's, and St Matthias & St Luke,

Sunday, 12 December 2010

Since the BC Court of Appeal issued its decision on 15 November 2010, the four congregations involved in litigation with our former diocese have been engaged in a time of prayer, consultation, reflection and discernment.

This discernment time has involved many meetings within and between the four parishes, where we heard from our legal team, listened to many points of view, searched Scripture and prayed together.

We are all committed to seeking and obeying our Lord's leading and acting in accordance with His Holy Word. All of us are fully prepared to walk away from our church properties if that is the path God has chosen for us. We know that everything we have is a gift from God and we hold it in open hands.

Earlier this week, the leadership of the four churches met to report the results of the discernment and consultation processes within each parish and to decide on a course of action.

We were blessed by the gracious sharing, humility and mutual submission that was demonstrated as we came to this decision. Recognizing that unanimity in large congregations is virtually impossible, we are grateful to God for the strong majority support in each of the parishes for the decision to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. Please pray for and care for our brothers and sisters who may not agree with this decision.

The Trustees of the four parishes are moving forward in unity and have now instructed our legal counsel to prepare an application for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. This application must be submitted by January 14th.

This is not the path any of us would have preferred; however, we initiated court proceedings when threats to replace trustees began to be carried out and when the Diocese caused banks to freeze two parishes' bank accounts. The Trustees of the four parishes sought the court's direction and clarification as to their status and responsibilities. The courts have agreed that the bishop did not have the lawful authority to fire or replace the Trustees.

Our differences with the Diocese of New Westminster stem back to the 1990s when the theological position of the diocese began to shift markedly away from established Anglican teaching and practice. This has always been about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the authority and interpretation of Scripture. We are seeking to continue our biblically faithful and historic Anglican tradition and witness in church buildings that were founded and built for that purpose.

Thank you for your prayers and support – and for participating in this important decision. Please continue to pray for this next stage of our journey together.

This is the season of Advent, the start of the Christian year, and the celebration of Christmas. Let's turn our focus fully to the joy of this season and the Good News of God's great gift of Jesus Christ.

We would like to wish all, including members of the Diocese of New Westminster, a Merry Christmas, and we invite everyone to join us at our services this Christmas season as we celebrate the birth and mission of Jesus Christ.