

**The 38<sup>th</sup> General Synod of The Anglican Church of Canada**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba – June 17 – 25, 2007**

**Presidential Address**

*The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison, 12<sup>th</sup> Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada*

*And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people unto me*

The theme for this 38<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada is “Draw the Circle Wide.” It is from a song by Bishop Gordon Light, and is consistent with the intention of the Lord of the Church to draw all people to himself. Since Christ was lifted up from the earth the circle of his love has grown ever wider through the centuries, now encompassing every continent and island on the planet. And from our beginnings as Anglicans our circle has grown ever wider - geographically certainly, as we are now present in 164 countries of the world, but also spiritually, culturally and socially. From the time of the Elizabethan Settlement we have been an inclusive Church, holding together the convictions of both Puritans and Episcopalians in a single ecclesial body. We have widened the circle to include men and women once consigned to the margins of life, and have recognized our Lord’s preferential option for the poor and the oppressed. And here we are, from every part of Canada, with international partners and guests, together drawn to him who was lifted up on the cross for our sakes. By sharing the new life he has won for us, we give glory to God, and strengthen one another to serve in his name the world he loves.

General Synod is an important moment in the life of our church. It is our highest decision-making body, bringing together bishops, clergy and laity from every diocese across this vast land of Canada. While we have many partners and guests with us, who will be introduced at various points in the Synod, I would like at this point to acknowledge the presence of His Grace the Archbishop of York and Primate of England, the Most Reverend John Sentamu; also the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Canon Kenneth Kearon, the Chair of the House of Deputies of the Episcopal Church in the United States, Ms. Bonnie Anderson, and arriving later in the Synod, the Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts-Shori.

We begin in Eucharistic celebration of the one Lord who calls us into the way, the truth and the life he reveals through his self-giving, suffering and sacrifice. When we leave this Synod in seven days, we will do so as those who are sent into the world with a mission – God’s mission for the healing and reconciliation of the world. “As the Father has sent me, even so, send I you. Receive the Holy Spirit,” says the Lord.

“Serving God’s world, Strengthening the Church” was the intent of the Framework for Mission and Ministry we adopted three years ago, to carry us through the following six years. We are here to give an account of our stewardship of that resolve to one another and to God.

We are here as well to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church for the next steps in our journey towards the realization of God's kingdom of justice and peace.

We are here to celebrate the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is within us and among us – leading us into all truth and showing us things that are to come.

None of this will be accomplished if we do not enter into the hard work of discernment. Our prayer and Bible study, our reflection on reports brought before us, our consideration of the challenges of the world, and the needs of the Church, at home and abroad, will all be part of that. Listening to one another carefully in the information dialogues, and engaging respectfully in the discussion of motions will all be involved in our discernment of what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Some of the discussion will be difficult, and opposing views I realize are strongly held. Nonetheless I urge you to remember your baptismal commitment to “seek and serve Christ in all persons” and to “respect the dignity of every human being” in those discussions. It is part of the hard work of discernment.

### **Primal Election**

High on the list of priorities for our discernment will be the choice of the 13<sup>th</sup> Primate, as an instrument of our unity across Canada, to preside in the Councils of our Church, to give leadership in the realization of decisions made by this Synod and to be a voice of representation and advocacy for us in the world, in the global family of churches and in dialogue and collaboration with other faith communities.

### **The Windsor Report:**

We have been asked to respond to the Windsor Report, as have all other Churches of the Anglican Communion. It is offered as a way for our family of churches to move ahead together in mission, maximizing our intercommunion in the face of diversity. Recommendations for action will come before us from the Windsor Report Response Group chaired by Dr. Patricia Bays.

### **St. Michael Report:**

Following the last Synod, and at its request, I asked the Primate's Theological Commission to consider whether the blessing of same-sex relationships is a matter of doctrine or not, and to report their findings to the Council of General Synod. Their conclusions are in the St. Michael Report, which comes before you with a motion commended to us by the Council.

Our department of Faith, Worship & Ministry, under the direction of Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, has been kept particularly busy during the triennium staffing both the Theological Commission and the Windsor Response Group, supervising a new Youth

Ministry Coordinator, and organizing an excellent national conference on healthy parishes.

### **Issues Related to Blessings:**

Certainly one of the most difficult items for our discernment will be the question of how to proceed on the issue of same-gender relationships. Related to it are other questions. One is the deeper question of how Anglicans receive and understand the Scriptures in the light of modern scholarship and contemporary experience. Another is how our decisions will impact our sister churches in the Anglican Communion. And beside that is a question as to the nature of the Communion, and the appropriate relationship between provincial autonomy and global interdependence.

Another way of putting that is, how do we wish authority to be exercised or limited within our family of churches? And perhaps most important, how will our decisions witness to the Good News of God in Jesus Christ for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters within the Church and outside it. There are of course many other questions to consider in the hard work of discernment over this issue. We are taught that the first principle of moral theology is obedience to conscience, and I ask each of you to embrace that principle, and with it the ethic of respect for the conscience of those who disagree with your own. The second principle of moral theology is to inform your conscience to bring it, if possible, into line with the teaching of the Church. And here careful listening using the Anglican approach of Scripture, Tradition and Reason will be helpful.

At the end of the day, when decisions are made, they will not be unanimous. Differences will remain, but the unanimous opinion of the Theological Commission (and of many other sources) is that the question of same-gender blessings should not be a communion breaking issue. So the alternative to that is that in keeping with a long Anglican tradition, we make room at the table for those whose views we do not share. For the table is the Lord's and not our own. And it is He who invites us to share the life that is offered there for the sins of the whole world.

### **PWRDF:**

As distracting as the issue of sexuality has been in recent years, much has been accomplished during the past triennium. The Primate's World Relief & Development Fund (PWRDF) announced its Partnership for Life Programme for a generation without AIDS. With it came a financial goal of \$1 million. With the help of the Stephen Lewis videotaped address from the last Synod, a fine audio-visual educational display that has travelled the country and is here at the Synod, the response of the Church has been phenomenal. You have already contributed more than triple the target. The amount now stands at about \$3.2 million, and the momentum continues. In fact last year alone PWRDF raised in total \$8.6 million to support disaster relief and development projects in some 30 countries. You can be justly proud of the work that our new Executive Director, Cheryl Curtis, and her remarkable team have accomplished for us.

## **Indigenous Concerns**

We are grateful that during the triennium a revised agreement was reached with the Federal Government over claims arising from the legacy of residential schools. Every diocese in the country has done its part in contributing to the Settlement Fund of \$25 million. The new agreement has been approved by the government and by the courts. We are now in a waiting period until August 22 to allow former students who wish to, to drop out of the agreement in order to pursue their own cases through the courts. Unless 5000 elect that option then the Agreement will achieve its final confirmation, and our obligation will be reduced to about \$17.5 million. This will result in refunds to the General Synod and a number of dioceses, and would release funding for the on-going work of healing and reconciliation.

## **National Indigenous Anglican Bishop:**

At this Synod we celebrate yet another step in the journey towards self-determination for Indigenous Anglicans. The Rt. Rev'd Mark MacDonald has been appointed for a three-year term as our first National Indigenous Anglican Bishop to support Indigenous ministries across the land, and to be an advocate for native concerns in the Councils of the Church, and where needed, with governments. He is a Canadian with aboriginal roots and has served as Bishop of Alaska and of Navajo land in the United States. He has been a frequent visitor among us and is well known to many of us. We are already feeling the benefit of his presence.

## **The Anglican Foundation:**

The death of the Executive Director of the Anglican Foundation, Canon John Erb in July 2005 was a great loss to us. We were fortunate to be able to secure the services of Dean John Wright as his successor. This year the Foundation celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of making loans and grants to Anglican entities across Canada. It now stewards some \$15 million in capital, a significant amount of which is in designated trusts and endowments. Two new funds have recently been created, and are held by the Foundation. The first is for the Council of the North, and is seeded with \$13,000 in initial gifts. The second is for support of our chaplains in the Canadian Forces through the Bishop Ordinary, to which I have been able to make an initial gift of \$50,000 resulting from a fund raising dinner. It is hoped that these and the general funds of the Foundation will grow significantly through your generosity. A \$50.00 gift secures you an annual membership in the Foundation.

## **The Pension Committee**

During the triennium the Diocese of Montreal merged its Pension Plan with that of General Synod, making the General Synod Plan inclusive of every diocese in Canada. There have been a number of changes in the Pension Plan and the Disability Plan, and

we learned some things about consultation in the process. A recent feature has been the offer of automobile and home insurance at favourable rates for those who wish it. We have been well served by Ms. Judy Robinson, our Director of Pensions, and by a vigilant and competent Committee and Trustees.

### **Development Office:**

In this Synod you will be asked to support a new approach to financial development. While Letting Down The Nets has given substantial assistance to dioceses, particularly in developing mission statements and stewardship programmes, we intend to establish a new Financial Development office modelled on those of universities and hospitals. Peter Blachford was appointed our National Treasurer at the beginning of this triennium, and is making a very positive mark both in dialogue with our dioceses and in the financial operations of General Synod.

### **Anglican Book Centre:**

One such mark is the successful negotiation with Augsburg Press, which allows the ministry of the Anglican Book Centre to continue under the auspices of Augsburg Press. Book Centre deficits had caused significant deficits in the General Synod budget in recent years, to a point that we were on the brink of closing the Book Centre. Augsburg Press has the advantage of its association with the very large market, resources and buying power of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which should allow them to operate the store at a profit. This is a significant affirmation of our full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and will create some real synergy in our shared resources.

### **Communications:**

At the suggestion of our Director of Communications, Sam Carriere, I initiated a web cast series entitled 'Conversations with the Primate.' It was a grant from the Anglican Foundation that first made this possible, later assisted by two Primate's (Fundraising) Dinners. A new segment has been on the web about once a month for most of the triennium inviting response by e-mail. Improved communication is always of benefit in such a diverse family as ours. The internet is upon us as a major vehicle of communication, and this has been but one effective example of its use. I am grateful to the Foundation, to Anglican Video, and to those of you who have taken the time to engage the conversation.

### **Youth Ministry**

The inclusion of youth in significant and appropriate ways in the life of the church has been an important priority in the past triennium, although no budget was provided for it. I am grateful to Huron College for giving us the opportunity to partner with them in the 'Ask and Imagine' programme – a leadership training experience that draws Anglican

young people together from every province in Canada. Also to the Eco Justice Committee for initiating Justice Camps with an emphasis on Anglican Young People. Again with new funds raised from Primate's Dinners, we were able to retain Judy Steers as part-time Youth Coordinator for Youth Ministry. Grants from the All Churches Trust (U.K.) enabled us to establish a youth website known as [generation.anglican.ca](http://generation.anglican.ca) (for which I have been a monthly blogger). Not only does it attract Canadian young people; there are regular visits to the site from all over the world. My thanks to so many young people who have met with me all across Canada to share with me their experience of life in the church and their hopes for the future. They are an encouragement and an inspiration.

### **The Episcopal Church of Cuba**

Since the Cuban revolution the Church in Cuba has no longer been part of The Episcopal Church of the United States. A Metropolitan Council was established to oversee the work of the Diocese, and to be its liaison with the rest of the Communion. It consists of the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, the Primate of the West Indies and the Canadian Primate who is always its President. I cannot stress enough how important our relationship with Cuba is to the Church there. Just days ago we returned from my last official visit, during which I presided at the consecration of two Suffragan Bishops for the Diocese. Both were appointed by the Metropolitan Council on the request of the Bishop, and with the concurrence of Synod. One of the new Suffragan Bishops is the first woman bishop in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Anglican Partnerships:**

Dr. Ellie Johnson oversees our relationships with provinces and diocese throughout the Anglican Communion, as well as with such bodies as the World Council of Churches and the Canadian Council of Churches. Our relationships with our partners are enormously important. A very difficult decision during the triennium due to budget constraints was the reduction of our staff to maintain those relationships. We began the triennium with three Regional Officers – one for Africa, one for Asia & the Middle East, and one for Latin America & the Caribbean. We end it with only one person to manage these all-important global partnerships. Given the enormous demands for ministry in so many parts of the Communion, it is my prayer that a way will be found to review that decision in this triennium. If “Serving God’s World” is to be our theme, then our global partnerships should remain of high priority. It is important to note that despite the politics of Primates, our partnerships throughout the Communion remain strong and healthy at the level of dioceses. One of many indications of that is a recent visit by the Bishop of Toronto and his wife to Uganda, where they were graciously welcomed in several dioceses, and our partnerships affirmed. An extended visit to Uganda by the Bishop of Rupertsland received a similarly gracious and affirming welcome.

### **The Canadian House of Bishops**

There have been many changes in the House of Bishops during the triennium, with retirements and consecrations of new bishops. A particularly important change has been in the spirit of the House, as bishops work together respectfully and prayerfully across lines of disagreement. The triennium ended on a high note with the Archbishop of Canterbury leading a retreat on apostolic ministry to begin our final meeting in which we nominated candidates for the primatial election. I am proud of our bishops, and grateful to them for the way they have come together in trying to exercise leadership in difficult circumstances, and for the way they have enabled and supported me in the three years of my primacy.

### **The Structures of the Communion:**

These are indeed difficult days as the traditional structures of our Church are challenged and their roles called into question. Faith and order have always gone hand in hand in the life of the Church. And Anglican order has been both distinctive and clear. The Lambeth Quadrilateral, adopted by the Lambeth Conference in 1888 sets out both faith and order as essential elements for the reunification of the Churches. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the Creeds – both the Apostles’ and the Nicene – are the essentials of faith. The faithful practice of the dominical sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist) and maintaining the historic episcopate, locally adapted, are the essentials of order. It is within that framework that we are a family of autonomous churches held together by bonds of affection that have frequently been strained, and often mended. It is within that framework that we have achieved full communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. It is within that framework that the Church of England maintains full communion with the Church in Sweden, under the Porvoo Agreement, and with the Old Catholic Church in Europe despite differences in belief and practice. (Both churches have authorized public rites of blessing for same-sex couples) A serious question before us is how in our present discussion, we can honour both the faith and the order that define who we are.

### **Thanks and Farewell:**

I end this address with some words of thanks. First to God, who has shown me in my visits across Canada and beyond our borders that the light of Christ shines brightly in the midst of darkness, conflict and distress. My thanks to you for giving me the privilege of being your Primate for these years, and particularly for the prayers that have upheld me day by day. My thanks to groups and people in every diocese for your gracious welcome, and for showing me a remarkable and wonderful diversity of expression in our witness to Christ that strengthens my hope for the future.

Your staff at Church House comprises a remarkable fund of experience, expertise and commitment, now under the capable leadership of our new General Secretary, Archdeacon Michael Pollesel. Thanks to a splendid new publication, “Faces & Ministries” put out for your benefit, your staff need no longer be faceless. They have been a strong and willing support to our national committees and to me, despite often being asked to make more bricks with less straw. Two among them are particularly

deserving of my personal thanks – Jo Mutch and Paul Feheley, who together have done their best to help me fulfill the duties of this office.

Being a pastor for the whole Church is an awesome challenge, and one that I could not have undertaken without the love and support of my wife Lois, who has lived much of the past three years alone while I have travelled. We look forward to joining a growing crowd of retired Anglican bishops and spouses on Vancouver Island, close to our son and his wife, and our two grandchildren.

As together we seek to widen the circle of God's love in drawing all people to himself in Christ, I pray that we will be faithful to the great legacy we have received as Anglicans as people of the *via media* – the middle way. That is perhaps our greatest gift to the global Church – our ability to hold together in one family such a remarkable range of diversity. To churches that are confessional, or governed by a central majesterium that may seem untidy, and at times we even become fractious; but that is who we are. I leave the last word to Leonard Cohen, a Canadian poet and musician.

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering.  
There is a crack in everything.  
That's how the light gets in.*