

“Ties That Bind”
Being in Communion in the Anglican Church of the 21st Century

Address #3 – Trinity College, Toronto June 28, 2005

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada

(Due to illness the Primate was unable to write or deliver this address.
It was written and spoken by his principal secretary Archdeacon Paul Fehleley)

“What the Spirit is saying to the Churches”

In the middle of May 2005 the Primate wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to bring him up to date on where things were in Canada. I want to quote a paragraph from that letter

“I came home from Ireland as I suspect many of us did with some concerns in my heart. I think that the work that we did was very significant and should the Communion survive our `present difficulties` historians may well look back to that moment in time as a turning point. They will see that we stepped back from the brink and allowed all of our lives to be guided by the Holy Spirit. My concerns centre on living out the communiqué. We have put down on paper important words that are intended to give us breathing space. I dare say that the space needs to be filled with more than rhetoric”.

The Canadian House of Bishops met in late April 2005, would they be able to maintain the same spirit of cooperation that was evident in Saskatoon. Was the Primate's honeymoon as the chair over? And would the question of sending our members to the Anglican Consultative Council prove to be a dividing point among them?. When they came together there is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was among them -- perhaps with some other spirits as well. They unanimously agreed "neither to encourage nor to initiate" the blessing of same-sex couples "until General Synod has made a decision on the matter". The statement was met with approval from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who sent a message to that effect to the bishops. The House of Bishops statement also supported the commitment I made to my fellow primates to do my best to convince the Council of General Synod, to withdraw our members from the next meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. A significant addition to our meeting was the presence of Canon Kenneth Kearon the new general secretary of the Anglican Communion. I cannot say enough about the presence of Canon Kearon especially when the twenty-seven ECUSA Bishops joined us for the last few days .He has clearly inherited some of the Irish charm and skill that Archbishop Eames

is noted for. Kenneth made no presentations but was able to meet and talk with a substantial numbers of bishops. He was present for worship, conversation, debate and decision. All present deeply appreciated his availability and diplomatic skills and I believe the unity of the Communion took a step forward during his visit.

As I said this morning The Primates' communiqué asked an immense amount from Canada and ECUSA to voluntarily withdraw from the Anglican Consultative Council. It was not met in Canada with any sense of understanding or acceptance. My mail was inundated with the same question from all parts of our land- 'Why are we being punished when we have done nothing wrong?' since we "proceeded entirely in accordance with their (our) constitutional processes and requirements". Many also expressed a concern that blessings are occurring in a number of different provinces while we are being punished for being honest. Nevertheless, the Council of General Synod did vote to voluntarily withdraw from the ACC and support the breathing space asked for by the Primates. Our elected members are present to listen even as I speak this evening and let me share with you some reflections on the meeting and the presentation made last Tuesday (21 June 2005).

It is very difficult to summarize in any fair way the presentation that was made by our team. What I can do is to give you a glimpse into how it proceeded.

Each member of ACC, as they arrived, was given a kit with a wide variety of pieces of information. In the introductory letter the Primate said:

"It is a privilege for my fellow Canadian presenters and myself to gather with you at this meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. We have been looking forward to this opportunity to meet you in person and to honour the request for consultation from Lambeth resolutions, the Windsor Report and the most recent Primates' Meeting. We hope that these critical conversations will continue throughout the Communion

We have come among you to explain the current situation in Canada which includes: a wide diversity of views; the actions that were taken by some of our dioceses and the General Synod; the theological and biblical rationale that inform our consideration of the blessing of committed same-sex unions and; the ways in which we endeavour to remain in dialogue and communion.

We recognize that, although this matter has been before the Anglican Church of Canada for many years, some of our synodical decisions have caused distress to the wider Communion. We have not always consulted with our brothers and sisters around the Anglican Communion and we deeply regret that the bonds of our mutual affection have been strained.

We affirm our continuing membership in and commitment to the worldwide Anglican Communion. In partnership with other Provinces we remain committed to evangelism, a compassionate response to the needs of suffering humanity, and to programs of relief, justice and peace for all. With humility we seek to

honour these commitments, knowing also our need to listen and learn from the experiences of our brothers and sisters in faith in other Provinces of the Communion.

We continue to affirm the Ten Principles of Partnership endorsed by the Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Cycle of Prayer as sources of unity in the cause of mission.

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will guide our hearts and minds as we share together in the work that is before us."

Bishop Sue Moxley began the presentation

"We're here to let you know we value our place in the Anglican Communion. The decision was made to come to ACC. We agreed to make this presentation ... We wanted to be here."

She also introduced the presentation team that I mentioned this morning: Dean Peter Elliott, Prolocutor of General Synod and Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in the Diocese of New Westminster, Maria Jane Highway, an aboriginal member of the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee, Robert Falby, Chancellor of the Diocese of Toronto, and the Rev. Dr. Stephen Andrews, President of Thorneloe University and a member of the Primate's Theological Commission and the Primate.

Stephen Andrews spoke to the biblical and theological groundwork that informed the actions of the Anglican Church in Canada and also about the St. Michael Report emphasizing that the issue should not be "communion-breaking".

Maria opened her portion with prayer in her native tongue.

She said that when she started to think about people living in same-gender relationships that it was important to accept them as they are.

She also addressed the diversity of the Canadian people. "Being an aboriginal person, being part of this presentation, is what makes Canada so unique," she said.

She placed the issue of same-gender blessings into the perspective of her people. "Alcohol, drugs, suicide are very important," she added. "These issues are more important to our elders than what is being talked about right now."

Bob Falby provided the legal background about same-sex marriage in Canada and spoke about the constitutional process of our Synods

Peter Elliott talked about his own circumstances of being gay and living in a committed relationship and presented a portrait of the diocese of New Westminster.

He told members that since 2003, in his diocese, there have been 14 liturgies celebrating the commitments of lesbian and gay couples.

The Primate concluded the presentation and affirmed the commitment of the Anglican Church in Canada. "I hope what comes shining through is a profound Canadian commitment to the Communion and to its instruments and to its partnerships around the globe."

The key message that we were trying to convey stressed that the church is still "in the midst of a conversation" on the issue of blessing same-sex unions and affirms that the church is committed to maintaining its membership in the Anglican Communion.

One of the documents that was given out says "We experience in our province many of the deep divisions that the Communion experiences, and believe that it is only possible to grow in our mutual understanding where our disagreement has not broken our communion with one another,"

Other parts of the presentation included a segment on how the Canadian church is led and governed, a description of diversity in the Canadian church and in society, the importance and influence of the Baptismal Covenant, and a segment on the importance of biblical authority and interpretation in the debate.

It is impossible to know exactly how things were heard. Many have misunderstood what we were doing, thinking that it is about convincing people to think in a different way. We were there sharing our story in the hope that hearts would be open to the truth of where Canada is in this question. A reception we held was extremely well attended by people with eyes wide open saying that they had not understood, until today, the Canadian circumstances, particularly that we are in the midst of an ongoing conversation.

Another longstanding commitment was finally honoured when the listening process called for in the 1998 Lambeth resolution 1.10 (among many places) was put into play. It calls for the Secretary General:

1. To collate relevant research studies, statements, resolutions and other material on these matters from the various Provinces and other interested bodies within those Provinces; and
2. To make such material available for study, discussion and reflection within each member Church of the Communion; and
3. To identify and allocate adequate resources for this work, and to report progress on it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to the next Lambeth Conference and the next meeting of this Council, and to copy such reports to the Provinces.

The other motion that has caused a great deal of discussion endorsed the Primates' February 2005 request that the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada "voluntarily withdraw their members from the Anglican Consultative Council, for the period leading up to the next [2008] Lambeth Conference".

This resolution included an amendment that "interprets reference to the Anglican Consultative Council to include its Standing Committee and the Inter-Anglican Finance and Administration Committee".

It is important to emphasize that the original motion included another phase that was not included in the final version. The wording that was changed was as follows:

"Further requests that the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada withdraw their members from all other official entities of the Communion for the same period . . . ".

Evidently there was not enough support for those who were advocating this idea and they were forced to withdraw it.

The meeting on this motion was closed to the public and the vote was done by secret ballot. What was the result of this so-called overwhelming rebuke that some have interpreted as showing us the door or banning us from the Communion?

The vote was 30 in favor, 28 against, with 4 abstentions and a number of people not voting at all - well less than 50% of the 65 voting members.

The comments from the two North American Primates are worth noting.

Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold said:

"The vote, which was contingent on the absence of the six votes of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada reveals a divide within the membership of the ACC. I very much hope that the listening process now mandated by the ACC will be one step in healing this divide... The work and mission of the Anglican Communion is carried out largely through international commissions and networks in which the Episcopal Church continues as a fully active and committed participant. It is through these means and our numerous other relationships focused on mission to our hurting world that we will, with God's grace, find our way forward."

And from Archbishop Andrew Hutchison:

"The decision to exclude the Anglican Church of Canada from two Anglican Consultative Council committees on which it does not sit is regrettable in principle but will have no practical effect.

We do regret the decision, although we note that it was adopted by an extremely narrow margin. Had our members and our American colleagues been allowed their vote, it would have failed. We regret that the Anglican Consultative Council made such a decision in a forum in which we are not being allowed to participate and in which we have no voice. There is, after all, a pretty fundamental democratic principle that says that when decisions are made that affect you, you are allowed to speak to them.

Our hope is that the discussions and debates of the past few days will provide the impetus for the discussion about homosexuality and the role of gays and lesbians in the church to begin in those parts of the Anglican Communion where they have not yet begun."

What then is the Spirit saying to the Anglican Church of Canada? There are those who seem to think that this is all about being on a one way street and that we are wrong and that we must completely turn around and repent of all that we have done in order to be faithful members of the Anglican Communion. I disagree. In the brochure it said for this third address "What the Anglican Communion will need to look like if the Anglican Church of Canada is to remain a member." Much of the press would seem to want you to believe that all of the responsibility for belonging is on our shoulders. It is not up to any individual primate to dictate how Canada is to act or what motions our synods may or may not pass. We always have and always will continue to take seriously what our brothers and sisters within the Anglican Communion say but we are, as they are, independent provinces within the Communion. I believe the Anglican Church of Canada will continue to be part of the Anglican Communion and that we will not compromise our ability to make conscientious decisions about the life of our church. An Anglican Communion that becomes monolithic, whose dictates come from afar, is not part of the Anglican Church that I know and love. We, as a church, need to recapture the language that has been increasingly used and obscured by some. I think of words like "orthodox" and "classical Anglicanism". People constantly write to me that we need to return to the classical Anglican position. Classical Anglicanism is not a Church that is called to either conservative or liberal fundamentalism. Our history is not one of conformity, Anglicanism is always messy and I would suggest always will be. Our Church Universal should not be afraid of diversity or change. In fact we thrive upon it. Our call is to faithfulness not to success -- to honesty, not to deceit. The spirit of accommodation is why the Anglican Church has a place within the Christian family. No church is in as strong a position as we are to bridge the catholic and protestant traditions. The Anglican Church of Canada supports the Lambeth Quadrilateral and we participate in the Anglican Communion. We share our

people and our gifts in order to support ministry without requiring subscriptions to particular interpretations of scripture.

We have honoured the requests made of the Canadian Church by the 2005 Primates' Communiqué to the best of our ability. There are signs of hope. Bishop Michael Ingham traveled to the Diocese of Taiwan in the heart of South East Asia in February 2005 and together they renewed a new five-year agreement as companion dioceses. The Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Communion met in Johannesburg in August 2004 and everyone worried that no one would show up. They had 35 of 38 secretaries come and work together. I mentioned earlier that Jill Cruise from the Partnerships Dept. of the National Office visited Uganda and Kenya and was welcomed and received warmly. 'No do not withdraw from us' was certainly the message that she heard.

Are others using the breathing space created by the Primates to further work towards unity and understanding? Clearly the answer is no.

One could cite a number of examples but one will suffice.

These are quotes from Archbishop Bernard Malango, Primate of the Province of Central Africa, from an interview with David Virtue dated 24 June 2005:

"We shall meet as CAPA [Council of the Anglican Provinces of Africa] Primates in October and one of the questions will be where a new Anglican Communion will be set up. We shall approach that question very carefully. The choice right now is Alexandria. We did not want it to be in Israel....too political, nor any other Middle East nation, nor Africa, for obvious reasons, nor Europe or Southeast Asia. We think Alexandria, Egypt is best as we can trace our historical roots from there. We can then start from an historical basis. The third trumpet is going to produce the right thing for us.

Each province has been asked to send six people: A primate, senior bishop, senior priest a layman or laywoman and a youth representative - it will be solely CAPA and Global South people only. "

The interviewer continued: Is there a timetable for the break up of the Anglican Communion?

The Archbishop responded, *"It will all be resolved before the next Lambeth Conference. It will all be done within the next three years because we are fed up with talking. We have traveled and talked and a lot of resources have gone into this, resources that should have been spent doing more productive and helpful things like feeding the poor. It is hopeless to go on talking and not bringing about resolution."*

I do agree with the Archbishop that a lot of resources have gone into this debate which could have been spent more productively but where is the grace ? Where

is the patience ? Where is the willingness to strive for the unity of John 17 that the world may believe? Will they be convinced by power or by love?

Ask yourself this: Why are you an Anglican? What brought you into this church and what causes you to stay? After scripture, tradition, and reason, what are some of the important ingredients that would need to be part of the Anglican Communion if we are to stay ?

This partial list is from a book called, *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources* (SPCK, Fortress, 1991) edited by G.R Evans and J Robert Wright.

Inclusiveness

Openness to change

A gift for adaptation, pragmatism, the honoring of reason

A belief in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit

Love of learning

Tolerance

Common prayer, not common opinion

Distrust of dictatorial authority

Understatement and restraint

Incarnational emphasis: a cherishing of creation

Valuing of human intellect, will, and conscience as vehicles for God-with-us

Positive attitude toward sciences and human culture

Holistic view: mind and heart

Respect for both corporate and individual insight

Sacramental emphasis: outward signs effect real participation in the divine - sacraments are an accessible and reliable means of grace

Recognition of all creation as potentially the place of revelation and communion

Concern for social needs

Stress on individual responsibility

Confidence in human capacity to know and do good

We have in the Question and Answer sections of this Divinity Associates conference challenged the Archbishop of Canterbury about some of his decisions and leadership. Last Sunday he preached a remarkable sermon as part of the ACC meeting. I would commend the whole sermon to you and in closing want to quote a significant portion of it to you.

"... We can only come to God empty-handed, looking into his face, depending absolutely on Him." We believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. The grace of the Lord Jesus, which is what the Gospel story is about today. Once again, the strict make their challenge. What is Jesus doing in the company of tax collectors and sinners? Jesus' reply is wonderfully ironic. 'If you don't think you need me,' he says to the strict believers, 'feel free to go.' And we might think he looks each one of them in the eye and says, 'If you don't think you need, you can go.' And there's our challenge. As

Christ looks at each one of us, which of us is able to say, 'All right, I don't need you, I'll go.' 'Those who are well have no need of a physician.' So says Jesus to his critics and to us. 'So if you are healthy, you don't need me. If you are whole, at peace with yourself, satisfied in your skin, happy in the world, you don't need me.' And again, which of us will say, 'I am whole. I have finished my work. I am at peace in the world.'

The difficulty of the Gospel is perhaps this: that it gives comfort neither to the legalist nor to the libertine. It doesn't say, 'You can win the grace of God by being good', and it doesn't say, 'The grace of God makes no difference to you.' It sweeps away the cobwebs and the veils, and makes us face a Jesus who says, 'So, do you need me or not? Are you hungry? Are you sick? Is your work, your life unfinished? Because, if you are whole and not hungry, and finished, go.'

Here we are then, this morning, the people who have not found the nerve to walk away. And is that perhaps the best definition we could have of the Church? We are the people who have not had the nerve to walk away; who have not had the nerve to say in the face of Jesus, 'All right, I'm healthy, I'm not hungry. I've finished, I've done.' We have, thank God, not found it in us to lie to that extent. For all the lies we tell ourselves day after day, that fundamental lie has been impossible for us. Thank God. We're here as hungry people, we are here because we cannot heal and complete ourselves; we're here to eat together at the table of the Lord, as he sits at dinner in this house, and is surrounded by these disreputable, unfinished, unhealthy, hungry, sinful, but at the end of the day almost honest people, gathered with him to find renewal, to be converted, and to change. Because the hard secret of our humanity is that while the body has the capacity to heal itself, the soul it seems doesn't. The soul can only be loved into life – and love is always something that we cannot generate out of our own insides – where we have to come with hands and hearts open to receive.

The people who didn't have the nerve to walk away. And because they didn't have the nerve to walk away, the people who not always in an easy or welcome way, find they have more in common than they might have thought. What do we all have in common this morning in this church? We are hungry for God's love, God's truth, and God's healing, and we have recognised that we cannot heal our own spirits, but must come to one another and to God for that healing. Hungry together, reaching out our empty hands together, we discover something about our humanity that we could in no other way discover, and we as an Anglican Communion, a world-wide fellowship of believers, we are saying that from country to country and language to language, and culture to culture, there is always the hunger, there is always the need for love, and at that level our human solidarity is revealed to us as it is in no other way.

So our being together here, at the table of the Lord, recognising that it is not about us but about Him, that our security lies not in the signs of our virtue and

achievement, but in God's generosity – being here on that basis is itself a mark of hope. And those of us who care about our Anglican Communion worldwide – its unity, its life, and its peace – care for it not in order to keep an ecclesiastical institution more or less upright, propping it up with more and more crumbling pillars and struts and buttresses. We care about it because we are part of the Body of Christ and the world needs the Body of Christ. It is hungry for truth and for love. We are here to be fed with that truth and that love in the body and the blood of the Lord in His Holy Sacrament. As we open our hands to receive that gift, so we open them to one another and to the world. We do not have the nerve to walk away. So much the better for us. The appetite for truth is still alive. So much the better for us. May truth and love, the truth and love of Jesus as he sits with sinners, be the motive power of all we do and say in our meetings as Church, in our witness to the world, in our protest against division and violence and hunger. May we say to the whole world that we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.

I wish to thank the Divinity Associates for the invitation to speak at this conference and your willingness to listen. Let my final words be those of Richard Hooker, which he used in response to his critics, and which I feel describes the situation in the Anglican Communion today: "that which they call schism, we know to be our reasonable service to God." Amen.