

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

Address # 2 - Trinity College, Toronto June 28, 2005

By

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

(Due to illness the Primate was unable to deliver this address.

It was spoken by his principal secretary Archdeacon Paul Feheley)

“ ... making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace”

This second address will explore current developments both within the Anglican Church of Canada and within the Communion that challenge the classical Anglican ethos with which most of us have been familiar.

If you ever want to hear God laugh at you just tell him your plans. When I arrived at General Synod in Saint Catharine's, Ontario, in May 2004 I truly did not expect to be elected as the 12th primate of Canada. I was preparing to retire as the Archbishop of the Province of Canada, move to Peterborough, Ontario, and enjoy my life. God indeed had another plan and when the bishops came into the auditorium to the standing ovation of the clergy and lay delegates no one was more surprised than I. From that moment onward I realized the overwhelming task outlined in General Synod's Canon Three which says, "The Primate shall maintain a pastoral relationship with the whole of the Anglican Church of Canada." There followed an overwhelming number of greetings, well wishers and opportunities to talk with General Synod members. A significant visit I made was to the Essential's tent to say to them "you are part of this church and have a place at the table as we seek the Holy Spirit's guidance for our church."

I also commented on the immensity and the diversity of this great land of Canada. It encompasses six time zones, and a remarkable variety of languages, cultures and histories that provide some very different filters through which we receive the Gospel. There are many parallels between the national challenge of Canadian identity and unity, and the Church's challenge to live out a faithful, comprehensive and catholic witness to the Gospel within the Anglican tradition.

In the early days of this country, and of this Church, there was a clear dominant culture rooted in British history and tradition, and not surprisingly, there were serious efforts to establish the Church of England as the state church in this very British colony. Being of one mind and one spirit was less complicated than it is in the current Canadian reality. Similarly, in the wider Anglican world, the dominant reality was that of a colonial church ruled by gentlemen bishops dispatched from England, and financed by powerful British missionary societies. Gradually the colonial churches achieved independence and took on a life of their own, reflecting to greater or lesser degree their own distinctive cultural ethos. That has been paralleled by the creation of dioceses and provinces within

Canada, each with its own canons and traditions, and with significant differences in ethos arising from both history and the cultural context of the local church.

In Canada, what has brought all this together is the creation of a General Synod, with a clear mandate for several dimensions of shared mission and ministry, and with clear authority to establish canonical norms for the church across Canada. It is that forum, therefore, in which significant issues among us are debated and resolved. There is no parallel body beyond our borders to deal definitively with international issues. And part of the present discussion is whether that is ultimately a good thing or not. Or, put another way, whether that is more beneficial than it is detrimental to the health, growth and well being of the Church throughout the world.

As noted in the first address, the incident that first gave rise to international controversy in the Anglican world was the deposing of John William Colenso, first Bishop of Natal. (It is interesting that polygamy was among the issues involved. Bishop Colenso did not require that newly baptized Zulus divorce all but one of their wives). While he was deposed in 1863 – an action reversed by the Privy Council in 1865 – it was not until 1911 that the fraction in the South African Church was healed, and the integrity of the Diocese of Natal restored.

The General Synod of a year ago deferred a decision on the blessing of same sex unions. It also asked me to authorize the Primate's Theological Commission to undertake a study as to whether the blessings were a matter of doctrine, and to report their findings to the Council of General Synod by the spring of 2006. The deferral, I think, for many people made sense; some dioceses had worked hard at the question, while others had not properly studied the question nor considered its impact on the life of the church. Of particular significance was a request from our Aboriginal partners for more time to consider the question. General Synod also had a pastoral concern for gay and lesbian members of our Church, and felt it was not right to leave St. Catharine's without saying something positive to them. A motion was brought forward, initially as an amendment, supporting the integrity and sanctity of faithful, committed same sex relationships. While many, including me would have preferred other words, I accept what General Synod did. I also listened carefully to the explanation by the person who moved the motion. He was very clear that the words were to be understood in a pastoral context only, and had no intention to comment on doctrine. We as a Church have received much criticism about the motion but it did reflect the mood and mind of General Synod. There are people on both sides of the discussion, however, who have pounced on the word "sanctity" as indicating a major change in direction for the Anglican Church of Canada. While I recognize the legitimacy of that interpretation, it is not my own. I stand by the original motion, and the intent declared by the mover and the seconder. The General Synod has deferred its decision to 2007.

We have been in this difficult conversation officially for nearly 30 years. To some it has become tedious and annoying, diverting far too much energy and attention from other important matters of mission and ministry. Others, however, both here and in the

Communion, have not even begun the conversation. (Perhaps we should remind ourselves that the Colenso affair took nearly 50 years to resolve).

The first few months of my primacy were an incredible learning experience and that learning continues to the present day. We celebrated the life of Archbishop Ted Scott, and through the fall prepared for the receiving of the Windsor Report and the House of Bishops meeting in Saskatoon in November. The House of Bishops has over the past few years been a very difficult and often times fractious place to be. I wondered as the new chair of the house, what kind of reception I would be in for? Adding to the anxiety was a report coming to the house about alternate episcopal oversight. The bishops had no common mind about the report chaired by Bishop Victoria Matthews and at the previous meeting of the house had appointed a group to see if there was anything that we could discover to enable the report to bear some fruit. With Bishop Fred Hiltz as chair they developed a document known as "Shared Episcopal Ministry". In true Anglican fashion it brings together the creative thinking of a number of people with a spirit of compromise and understanding. It establishes a way forward for any parish, whether liberal or conservative, struggling with their diocesan bishop to find an honourable way forward. It sorted out many of the critiques of Bishop Matthews' report and moved forward on the challenges put forward by the House of Bishops. In the end it received near unanimous approval with bishops from coast to coast to coast believing it a way forward. . The three dissenting votes were neither from the "liberal" nor the "conservative" side of the issue, but were cast by those in the middle who thought any tampering with the historic episcopate in its present form would be inappropriate. The House of Bishops had turned a corner and found a way to work together in a spirit of unity rather than the previous way they had acted. We seemed to have found many people moving towards a stronger sense of the Church than simply their own individual thinking on a number of questions

The Windsor Report, called into being by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the request of the Primates, was received by this first meeting of the House of Bishops at which I presided, and to my great relief it was unanimously received as an important document, and unanimously commended to the church for study. To that end, I was asked to write a pastoral letter to the Church, and I featured the report on a webcast, calling for responses from across the Church. The Council of General Synod similarly commended the report. The response time was short, and given the extent of the report, the responses were necessarily provisional. I am happy to report that there were over 200 responses before the cut-off date, and a response committee chaired by Dr. Patricia Bays studied comments from individuals, dioceses, theological colleges and various interest groups to create a report for me to take to the Primates' Meeting at Dromantine in Northern Ireland in February 2005. It proved a very valuable resource. It showed me the wide diversity of opinions within Canada: that many of those on the "conservative" side of the issue base their belief on scripture, while those on the "liberal" side base their belief on experience. Belonging to the Communion mattered a great deal and people were anxious for the church to solve the question and move on with other aspects of ministry. Their responses also encouraged me in a belief that I have held

since the day that I was elected and that is: as important as this issue is, that this single issue should not define my primacy. And so it was off to Ireland -- and what a wonderful introduction to that august body it was for me! Dromantine is the name of a 14th century stately home in the Diocese of Armagh, bought 80 years ago by a Roman Catholic African Mission Society. Being then at the height of Catholic power in Ireland, the house is wonderfully restored to its pristine original condition, with a new guest wing in which we were housed, all in the beautiful setting of rolling Irish hills. 35 of the 38 primates were there, with the moderators of the United Churches, two being absent through illness, and one through an urgent necessity in his diocese

We began with two days of Bible study on the temptations of Christ, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a silent retreat. Archbishop Rowan Williams was determined that we must first listen to God before listening to one another. Our formal sessions began with a presentation of the Windsor Report by the Commission Chairman, Archbishop Robin Eames. The Primus of Scotland stood in for the Bishop of Hong Kong (absent through illness) to present the report of the international response team that had gathered responses from the Communion as Dr. Bays' committee had for Canada. Early in the meeting we also appointed a writing group headed by Archbishop Peter Carnley, Primate of Australia, to track our discussions and draft a communiqué. We then went into small groups to discuss what we had heard, and our own responses to the Windsor Report, reporting later in plenary. Clearly there were those who had come with minds made up, and very little openness to other views. This was sharply underlined by the fact that some 14 of the bishops did not attend the daily Eucharist, even after the specific invitation of Archbishop Williams, and instead caucused together as we celebrated.

If I (Paul Feheley) may offer a personal aside Nothing troubled me more in Dromantine than the refusal of some to come to the Eucharist. After I returned Mr. Chris Ambidge asked me to write an article for the Integrator about Ireland. On this particular matter I wrote the following:

"..... came a difficult moment when it was announced that some of the Primates would not attend the daily Eucharist.

I must confess that this left me somewhat stunned. I could not understand then (nor do I now) how any Christian can choose not to share in the greatest gift that God has given us- the gift of his very self in bread and wine. How many Christians over the centuries have been prevented from receiving Communion because of war violence or many other reasons and yet here were people, Bishops and Archbishops in the Church of God choosing to stay away. Their argument was centred on the idea that unity of doctrine preceded unity of worship. I could not help but think about two things.

The first was that magnificent passage from *The Shape of the Liturgy* by Dom Gregory Dix, a liturgical scholar of the Anglican Benedictine Abbey of Nashdom who in the final chapter reflects on Jesus' words "do this in remembrance of me" and asks the haunting question, "Was ever a command so obeyed?"

The second were the Eucharists that I have celebrated over the years for Integrity. We know that we don't agree but always realized that there is something far more significant than what you or I think on the issue of same sex blessings. It is to see one another as our Beloved's beloved and to centre our lives around the Lord's Table that God may feed and teach us."

Rowan Williams, at the end of a plenary session summarized where he believed we were as a body. He posed three possible alternatives.

1. A very close following of the Windsor Report
2. Putting everything on hold until after the ECUSA General Convention
3. Walking separately from this meeting, and considering the possibility of new structures in North America

It was a bleak outlook. Robin Eames went to work in the hallways and lounges and in his own prayer and reflection through that night, and in the morning posed a way forward. He said that he had been brought to the conclusion that there were certain things North Americans had to take with them from this meeting, and certain things that the "global south" had to take home with them. North Americans, he believed, needed to be assured that their constitutional processes were recognized – that everything they had done was, as it were, according to Hoyle. And they needed to know that in going forward their constitutional processes would continue to be honoured (nobody would be putting a gun to our heads to decide within a matter of weeks). He believed that the global south needed to go home knowing that their voice had been heard, and that some action had been taken as a result. It was on the basis of that analysis and our general acceptance of it that important sections of the communiqué were drafted.

I hope you are sufficiently familiar with the communiqué that I need not go through it in detail here, but I believe it is important to offer a few comments on it. Like all such documents – indeed the Windsor Report itself – it is crafted in a way that allows a variety of interpretations and inferences. No doubt most of you have seen something of the range of spins that have come from various quarters of the Communion, and of our own church. Whether in fact it is capable of achieving a deep consensus of intent remains to be seen.

When the draft communiqué came before us, once again the Diocese of New Westminster was singled out. I objected on the basis that it is inappropriate for primates to comment on the internal affairs of a particular diocese. If they have an argument, it must be primate to primate, and province to province, and so the reference to New Westminster was removed.

The disapproval of Canada was in fact as much over the meaning of the word "sanctity" in the motion of the General Synod as it was about the blessings in New Westminster.

Much was said about the context in which primates of the global south minister. Those who are in the presence of aggressive Islamic majorities believe that the oppression they suffer will only increase if they are thought to be associated with any approval of homosexuality.

I, on the other hand, spoke of the Canadian context. Seven of our civil provinces and one territory, by ruling of the courts, authorize same sex marriage, and the Canadian parliament has before it legislation that would redefine marriage as between two persons. We are also in a country in which the largest Protestant Church – The United Church of Canada – has provided for same sex marriage for nearly 20 years. While not approved by all Canadians, homosexuality is generally accepted as part of the social fabric of the country. We are in a country that took seriously the lead of Lambeth 78, Lambeth 88 and Lambeth 98, and have been listening to the voices of homosexual Anglicans for 30 years. One of our largest dioceses – Niagara – by vote of more than two thirds asked its bishop to provide for the blessing of same gender relationships, and the largest diocese in the country (Toronto) came within a few percent of doing the same. And for 20 years we have been formed by the baptismal covenant of the Book of Alternative Services (BAS), calling upon us to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and (to) respect the dignity of every human being” In other words, we are not dealing with the wildcat action of one diocese in western Canada. We are trying to minister in the context of a ground swell across the nation, which is unlikely to be reversed in the long run.

It was difficult for many primates to understand the way we work in North America, and why I could not commit this church to what was asked of it. I did, however, undertake to use my best efforts to have the Anglican Church of Canada agree to the request of the primates, and I have done so, both with the House of Bishops and with the Council of General Synod.

It is worthy of note that at least in the formal sessions of the Primates’ Meeting, Bishop Griswold and I were completely isolated. There was no discussion about any other province seriously addressing the issue of homosexuality. There was no mention of the fact that the Liturgical Commission of the Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia had prepared a public rite for the blessing of same sex unions several years ago, although their General Synod did not approve it. There was no mention of the large number of blessings that take place in a great many dioceses in the Church of England, or Ireland, or even in the Scottish Episcopal Church. There was no mention of the Supreme Court of South Africa ruling that marriage is a union between two persons, and how the Church is addressing that. One would have thought from the actual meeting that only the U.S. and Canada had been struggling with this. It was only in the hallways and lounges that other primates dared speak of such things in their respective jurisdictions.

At the risk of stating the obvious, one of the most important issues underlying this whole discussion is our approach to the Scriptures. Archbishop Williams at one point felt it

necessary to remind us that in fact we all read the same Scriptures and regard them as authoritative, and that we all love Jesus. Be that as it may, we clearly do not all receive the Scriptures in the same way, nor for that matter act on our love of Jesus in the same way.

It seems clear that there is in all this a significant reaction to the colonialism of the 19th century church. Now that the global south holds the majority of the world's Anglican population, it wants its voice to be heard, and its weight to be felt. There is also more than a dash of anti-Americanism, and a resentment of America's apparent arrogance in acting as suits its interests regardless of how such actions impact elsewhere. While the focus may be on the U.S., we are understood as part of what is going on in North America.

There is little doubt in my mind that we were right on the edge of a major and more formal fracture in the Communion at Dromantine, underlined by Archbishop Williams' three alternatives. What the communiqué has done, in my view, is provide a little space and time for some positive things to happen. Whether the Communion will use that opportunity well or not remains to be seen.

Now, let's turn to some further developments since Dromantine.

First, the House of Bishops has agreed to a moratorium on same sex blessings. In 29 of our dioceses that has a clear and simple meaning. They committed themselves neither to encourage nor initiate public rites of blessing until after the General Synod has made a decision. The Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster has met and agreed by an overwhelming majority to a moratorium. In that case moratorium means that no new parishes will be authorized until after the General Synod of 2007. . The eight parishes now authorized to perform such blessings will not be inhibited from doing so

The Council of General Synod agreed to voluntarily withdraw Canada's members of the Anglican Consultative Council from active participation in the June 2005 meeting of the ACC in Nottingham. They are, however, attending as observers and will report back. What makes this a particularly difficult decision is that, as I suggested in the first address, the ACC owes a great deal to Canadian initiative and support. It was Ralph Dean, the Bishop of Cariboo (1957-1973), who in his capacity as Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion called for such a consultative body. He and another Canadian, Canon Ernie Jackson, prepared the terms of reference presented to the 1968 Lambeth Conference. First meeting in 1971, (7 years before the first Primates' Meeting) the ACC resonates with our Canadian sense of the authority of the Church – moral and judicial - being vested in laity, clergy and bishops acting together. It therefore commands more respect from Canadians than the other so-called instruments of unity. We agreed to send a special delegation of presenters to Nottingham for a consultation on how things have developed here in Canada. That delegation included Dean Peter Elliott of the Diocese of New Westminster, Prolocutor of General Synod, Canon Robert Falby, Chancellor of the Diocese of Toronto, The Rev'd. Stephen Andrews of Thorne

College, and member of the Primate's Theological Commission, and Ms Maria Jane Highway, an indigenous member of the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee. Our three elected Canadian members, Canon Allen Box, Ms. Sue Lawson and Bishop Sue Moxley, continue to stay at the meeting as observers. The others attended with me just for the presentation, and then returned home. The presentation having taken place just last week, you will hear more about it in the final address.

At the May 2005 meeting of the Council of General Synod, the report of the Primate's Theological Commission (The St. Michael Report) was presented – a year early. I assume that most of you will be familiar with its contents, and copies are available here for reference. The report is now commended to the church for study, in preparation for the 2007 General Synod. The Commission is of the unanimous opinion that the blessing of same gender relationships is a matter of doctrine, but not of core doctrine, and that this should not be a communion-breaking issue. It will be up to the General Synod to decide whether or not it accepts the opinion offered by the Commission. If it does, then the blessing of such relationships is a matter that is within the jurisdiction of General Synod, and cannot be decided diocese by diocese without authorization from the General Synod.

It remains entirely possible that as a Communion we will be no further ahead on this issue in three years time. It may be that the voices calling for full repentance on the part of Canada and the U.S. will be as loud as ever. But given the fact that Dromantine presented the real prospect of imminent fracture, I believe we have at least made room for accommodation by complying with the Primates' Communiqué, and staying in the conversation.

Why is all of this important? Because of clause 19 of the communiqué and I dare say no one here without looking it up could tell me what it says. Clause 19 states "These strategies are intended to restore the full trust of our bonds of affection across the Communion."

I will not know for certain until either I die or the eschaton comes whether our Lord wills for the church to bless same sex relationships. What I do know is that he has given us brains, a book and bread and wine to work through issues, to pray and study, to dialogue and debate. It is in this way that we as Christians on the journey of life make decisions.

I believe that we are doing all that we can to demonstrate to the whole Anglican Communion how important unity is to the Canadian Church. I, with all Canadians, continue to pray for humility, wisdom and compassion as we endeavour to live peaceably with all people