



Anglican Church of Canada

Office of the Primate, 80 Hayden Street, Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2
Tel. 416-924-9199 Ext. 276 / Email primate@national.anglican.ca

St Andrew's Day November 30, 2004

A Pastoral Letter from the Primate

My sisters and brothers in Christ,

The six-month anniversary of my installation as Primate is upon us and I want to begin my pastoral letter to you with a word of thanks. Since June, I have had many opportunities to be with Anglicans across our country. We have a Church that is full of faith, life and energy. From coast to coast to coast I have spoken with children and young people, clergy, lay people, government officials, aboriginal leaders and our ecumenical partners. What I have discovered are communities of faith and love that give hope through the gospel of our Lord. I thank you for your ministry and for the prayerful support that I have received.

I write to you at this time at the request of the House of Bishops. We recently met in Saskatoon, with a spirit of reconciliation and fellowship marking our time together. The House passed a unanimous resolution receiving the Windsor Report with gratitude, recognizing its importance and commending it to the Church for study. A second resolution asked me to write a pastoral letter inviting the people of our Church to make submissions about the report.

The Commission that produced this report was created by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, at the request of the Primates and was chaired by Archbishop Robin Eames of Armagh, Ireland. The Commission comprised 19 people from 14 of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion and who covered a broad spectrum of geography, culture and theology. The Rev. Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, the director of Faith, Worship and Ministry for the Anglican Church of Canada, was a member. It is extremely important to realize that this was not a committee to settle the difficult questions that we face about blessings of same sex relationships. Their mandate was to maximize unity within the worldwide Anglican family despite the differences that we may have. The recommendations they made were unanimous.

The report begins by describing the relationship called communion, into which Christians are called by God, and how this relates to the mission of the Church. It then describes the current difficulties and tensions that the Anglican Communion is experiencing.

The next section deals with principles of biblical authority and interpretation. How we hold these principles and make decisions, as close as possible to the local level, is one of the difficult questions that is raised. A clear challenge is the discernment of those issues that we can disagree about without dividing the Church.

The report then moves to its recommendations on the future life of the worldwide Anglican Church. It describes Instruments of Unity, especially the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and recommends the creation of an Anglican Covenant that would define the relationships among the member Churches of the Anglican Communion.

Further recommendations are directed to the Episcopal Church of the USA, and our own Canadian Diocese of New Westminster, asking them to express regret that their actions were undertaken without sufficient consultation with the rest of the Communion. It also called for a moratorium on the ordination of any further bishops who live in same gender unions and urged bishops not to approve Public Rites of Blessing for same sex relationships until "some new consensus" emerges internationally among Anglicans.

Another recommendation calls on bishops who have intervened in other dioceses and provinces to express regret for "the consequences of their actions" and "to effect a moratorium on any further interventions."

On my most recent webcast, available through our national Church website (www.anglican.ca). I invited all members of our Church to share their thoughts on the Windsor Report with me. I continue to seek responses. I have also invited each diocese to make an official response. These initial responses will become part of the message I take to Belfast, Northern Ireland, when all the Primates of the Anglican Communion meet in February 2005 and again to the Anglican Consultative Council that will meet in Nottingham, England, in June 2005.

Our General Synod has recognized the integrity and sanctity of committed, faithful same sex relationships. When we meet next in June 2007 we will need to address the outcome of these international consultations and our own Canadian processes to discern what decisions are appropriate for the life of this Church.

When the Primates gathered in 2000 they stated that "We are conscious that we all stand together at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, so we know that to turn away from each other would be to turn away from the Cross."

My love for Our Lord and our Church compels me to address these issues with determination, not for the purposes of winning or losing, but to honour the gospel values that we all share. I pray that you will accompany me.

I close with the concluding words of Archbishop Robin Eames' foreword to the Windsor Report:

"The Lambeth Commission...offers this Report in the prayerful hope that it will encourage the enhanced levels of understanding which are essential for the future of the Anglican Communion. Above all I pray it will be viewed as a genuine contribution to what communion really means to Anglicans."

I wish you a blessed Advent and a peaceful and joyful Christmas.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Andrew" in a cursive script, preceded by a small cross symbol.

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison
Archbishop and Primate