



The Open Door Conference: *An exciting message of hope*

By: Father Larry Winslow

The following is produced as a summary and commentary on the Open Door Conference held in Toronto by Anglican Essentials Canada at the Roy Thomson Hall from June 16th thru 18th, 2005. It represents the impressions of the writer and may have some different connotations from those which may be produced by other participants from Essentials Manitoba.

Essentials Manitoba was represented by nine persons from the Diocese of Brandon and there were another 11 persons from the Diocese of Rupert's Land present.

We are not leaving!

The Right Reverend Ronald Ferris, Bishop of Algoma stated, "The Anglican Communion has a magnificent future!" Archbishop Gregory Venables, Primate of the Southern Cone, and The Rev'd Canon Bill Atwood, General Secretary of Ekklesia, brought the message of great HOPE for the future of Orthodox Anglicans in Canada through their support along with that of the vast majority of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. Bishop Donald Harvey, Moderator of the Canadian Essentials Network, and Bishop Robert Duncan, Moderator of the Network within ECUSA brought us encouragement and optimism for the future based upon the solidarity that exists between the North American Orthodox Anglican movements and the Worldwide Anglican Communion coupled with the message of the Common Cause relationship that is growing within the Orthodox Anglican groups in North America.

The great news is, "WE ARE NOT LEAVING!" The revisionist liberal spin on Anglican Essentials Canada, and especially the Essentials Network, is that we are a divisive group set out to destroy the Anglican church of Canada (ACofC). This "party line" is heard throughout the liberal membership of the Church right through the national, provincial, diocesan, and parochial levels. It is designed to place the Orthodox Anglican Christians in a negative light before those who have not taken the time to understand the issue. There is a element of intimidation in trying to make those who want to stand firm for the Holy Word of God feel guilty in their loyalty to God as it seems to be the cause of the disunity with the "directions of the Canadian Church."

But the reality is, "WE ARE NOT LEAVING!" Anglican Essentials Canada (AEC) stands first for Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord under the authority and direction of the Worldwide Anglican Communion and the advice and support of the Primates who are faithful to the Holy Word of God! AEC is committed to remaining firmly ensconced within the Worldwide Anglican Communion. Further, as long as she remains within the Anglican Communion, AEC remains within the ACofC.

Bishop Robert Duncan emphasised the need for us to "Get it Together." The Common Cause of Orthodox Anglican groups embraces some 9 Anglican bodies in the USA together with AEC, ACiNW in New Westminster, and the ACiC who are all Canadian members of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. Bishop Duncan called upon the meeting to not pout, not "set-up new shops," and to stay in the Worldwide Communion. He challenged the meeting as members of the Worldwide Anglican Communion to be a Biblical people acting as missionary Church showing Christ – the light of the world as we "get it together" in standing firm.

The emphasis is, “WE ARE NOT LEAVING!” If any group is leaving the Worldwide Anglican Communion it will be one that refuses to act in cooperation with that body and refuses to accept the clear unalterable teachings of the Divinely Inspired Holy Scriptures of Almighty God. It will be the decision of those renegade bodies to “walk apart” from the direction taken by Lambeth and the Worldwide Primates Meetings that will be precipitating schismatic action from the Worldwide Communion. At the conference we heard a convoluted and unsupportable interpretation of the source of that wonder known as Anglican diversity from The Right Reverend Colin Johnson in his attempt to establish that abomination in the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. That settlement brought together diverse forms of worship within the oneness established under the Infallible Holy Scriptures. It did not provide for “diverse voices” of faith. It is those who would attempt to propose such fallacies and then use them to develop doctrinal statements not supported by Holy Scripture who will ultimately move away from communion Worldwide Anglicanism. These groups are the divisive ones. These groups will be the one’s leaving. WE ARE NOT LEAVING! AEC and its constituent groups will remain Christians who are Anglican in Communion with worldwide Anglicanism!

Theological position

Unlike the revisionist liberal position where the Holy Bible is merely a reference book to be constantly referred to and, if necessary, reinterpreted in the light of the current cultural situation and theology is considered to be a fluid thing based upon the will and experience of man, the Orthodox Anglican position is strongly supported by a firm Biblically driven theology. Bishop Ronald Ferris stated that the “inclusivism” touted by the liberally driven Church can only ultimately lead to a Universalist Fundamentalism. And this resultant theological stance is a theologically flawed and unacceptable position.

The Biblically based theological position of Orthodox Anglican Christians was clearly expounded by The Rev’d. Dr. David Short, The Rev’d. David Curry, The Rev’d. Dr. Murray Henderson, The Rev’d. Dr. J.I. Packer, and the Rev’d. Dr. Gary Thorne in a panel discussion chaired by The Right Reverend Malcolm Harding. The need to think Biblically and to place human sexuality where it belongs – founded in the Creation Plan of God was presented by David Short. Gary Thorne called us to return to the life of holiness based upon the Son of God. He reminded us that Truth is found in Holy Scripture and NOT in “due process.”

David Curry focused us upon the source of doctrine. He pointed out that doctrine is not “praxis,” process theology, or anything else. Doctrine is founded upon the witness of Holy Scripture as understood by those to whom it was written and as transmitted through the centuries. He founded his remarks upon our need to review the Holy Scriptures, the Creeds, the 39 Articles, the Solemn Declaration, etc. He stated that without such foundational elements we really have nothing to say.

Murray Henderson called us to get over the apathy. We are gathered in Crisis! And we need to make those tough decisions that, as Anglicans, we have the propensity to try not to make.

J.I. Packer, in looking at the unique and unsupportable road that the ACoFC seems to be following today, said it is essential for us to really focus on God’s Word and to be led only by God’s Word. In truly being citizens and subjects of the Kingdom of God we must live as disciples of Christ and sincerely follow “THE WAY” – which IS Christ! He called us into the concept that “the work of the Church is the Community of the Holy Spirit using its Gifts to function as the

family of God's adopted children with Jesus as our older brother." Presenting a fivefold pattern of life Dr. Packer called upon us to maintain:

1. Biblical Orthodoxy
2. Biblical Orthopraxy
3. Biblical Service
4. Biblical Mission
5. Biblical Unity with fellow Christians based upon biblical teachings as seen in Christ's words and the Apostolic Witness

Where we are

The Conference then proceeded to the question of where we, as concerned Orthodox Anglican Christians, are now. Archbishop Venables continued with his thematic key words "BUT GOD." His thoughts wrap around the concept that no matter what happens and no matter what is said, the ultimate thought is "But God" and what He is doing. It is so refreshing to hear an Anglican leader be so emphatic about the presence and action of Our Lord God through His presence and His Divine Word Living in Jesus Christ and Written in His Holy Scriptures.

Archbishop Venables assured us that we orthodox conservatives are not alone here in Canada. We are supported by 80% of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. He thanked Canada for producing the Anglican Essentials Criteria in 1994 as it gave the Southern Cone (his province) a foundation upon which to work. Further, the Global South with its multi-,millions of Anglicans is right with us in our struggle.

Archbishop Venables then walked through the steps at Lambeth 1998 and the Primates' Meetings including Dromantine this past February. He outlined some of the deceptive steps taken by the liberals in trying to derail the conservative onslaught in upholding the Holy Scriptures of Almighty God as being supreme. The deception and deceit was amazing coming from those who claim to be Christians. The issue of human sexuality has been clearly dealt with both at Lambeth 1998 and via the Primates' Meetings. There is no question of what has been undertaken and that ECUSA and Canada have been suspended for now in order to allow those bodies to decide whether or not they are going to be part of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. He stated, "The 'diversity' of Anglicanism has its limits." Obviously these have been reached.

Bishop Don Harvey encouraged Canadian Orthodox Conservative Anglicans. But he also warned of the signature problem of Canadians – "Apathy!" Bishop Harvey said that we need to be the voice that will tell this Church that we need to truly acknowledge Jesus! Time is running out.

Bishop Duncan talked about the changing tides in favour of Orthodox Conservative Anglicanism. Lambeth and Dromantine have strongly pointed us in that direction. ECUSA and Canada are on the carpet – no matter what "spin" their leadership tries to place on the situation (at this point of writing it has been seen that the same tide is running through the Anglican Consultative Council as it has just suspended the Canadian and American Churches until Lambeth 2008.

Bishop Ronald Ferris of the Diocese of Algoma spoke strongly and emphatically concerning the fault lines of deep conflict. He referenced the Canadian House of Bishops' concept of shared Episcopal ministry and characterised it as "a tool of graduation toward a change to secularism." In other words, it is totally useless to the cause of orthodoxy in the ACofC. He pointed out the

liberalism does not work – statistically, of the projected 750,000 Anglican membership in Canada, only 150,000 are in Church on any given Sunday. What a sad commentary this is.

Bishop Malcolm Harding, retired Bishop of Brandon, discussed the urgent times Canadian Orthodox Anglicans are experiencing. We need to form a solidarity for decisive action. We need to keep all Orthodox Conservative Anglican Groups (AEC, ACiC, ACiNW, etc) in touch with each other and speaking with a common voice. Yet it is necessary to act with care, gentleness, and sensitivity. Further, the power will not come from ordained but from the grass-roots laity. Bishop Harding also stated that there is new hope for the Anglican Church in this country via the Anglican Essentials Canada group.

Legal & Financial Implications

Joyce Lee reiterated that the battle for orthodoxy will not be without pain. But we are called to “bear the cross.” It will be necessary to be wary and wise. When any Episcopal threats come along it is necessary to check their legality. The laity should take the lead in this to protect their clergy. Also, it is wise to get a legal opinion concerning any Vestry or General Parish Meeting Motions concerning this issue.

There is an intentional activity going on at this point to build a National Legal Team that will be available to all Parishes and Dioceses.

Claus Lenk emphasised that the Essentials is now a Registered Charity and both the Network and the Federation Expense Budgets emanate from the Essentials Council. In order for Essentials to do its work, funding is necessary. This year’s budget is \$436,000 with 46% coming from individual donors and 54% coming from Parishes and Trusts.

Summary

Archbishop Venables stated that following Jesus is the most revolutionary thing we can do – such is counter-culture and exciting but upsets lots of people.

The Rev’d. Peter Klenner implored the conference not to lose sight of the Kingdom of God. What we are going through is a Gift from God and an answer to prayer – the need for reform in the ACofC. He outlined four requirements:

1. Theological Colleges (such as Wycliffe and Regent) where faith in Jesus Christ as The Way, The Truth, and The Life will be taught
2. Outreach to Young People – possibly in the form of an Orthodox Canadian Youth Rally
3. Bishops who are truly Evangelists and Pastors for Jesus Christ
4. Congregations whose primary goal is to Serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Rev’d. Canon Bill Atwood reaffirmed that a man must be a man of conviction AND a man of prayer. He pointed out the revisionist liberals are persons of conviction but lacking in the reality of the Holy Spirit. He called upon the conference to rise up and stop the pollution of the wells of faith with strange doctrines; to re-dig the wells of faith so that the waters of discipleship in Jesus Christ flow freely; and to re-order our Churches to engage the mission of Jesus.

AEC Functions Under Two Streams

The AEC will function under two arms - The Federation and the Network.

Anglican Essentials Canada has the following purpose to:

1. provide a forum, rallying point, and an identity for orthodox Anglicans
2. provide a voice for the constituency to the leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada, to other Anglican constituencies, and to the world
3. offer an interface to the leadership of the global Anglican Communion through which the Communion can recognise a faithful Canadian Anglican constituency and can p-provide direction to that constituency

Members of the Anglican Essentials Canada share the following desires:

1. to be in full communion with each other and the global communion
2. to act in submission to the Primates and the other instruments of unity of the Anglican Communion
3. to remain full members of the global Anglican Communion in the event the Anglican Church of Canada separates from the Anglican Communion by either voluntarily “walking apart” or by being excluded from the Anglican Communion by the Primates of the Anglican Communion or the Lambeth Conference
4. to maintain our Anglican orthodox Christian heritage
5. to work together and to share resources and organisational infrastructure wherever possible

Principles and mission of the federation

The Federation represents orthodox Anglicans who (though deeply concerned about the drift away from orthodoxy within their church) -

- a) believe they are not in impaired or broken communion with the Anglican Church of Canada or with their bishop.
- b) are able in conscience to participate in their diocese and the Anglican Church of Canada.
- c) believe it is their mission to pray for, labour and hope for repentance and renewal in the Anglican Church of Canada.
- d) will continue to work for change in the Anglican Church of Canada, and in particular, will seek to persuade the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada to commit to full membership and the teaching and doctrine of the Anglican Communion.
- e) will seek further clarification from the Primates and other Instruments of Unity as to the Anglican Communion membership status of the Anglican Church of Canada and its members
- f) will seek to be recognized by the global Anglican Communion as full continuing members of the Anglican Communion and work in submission to the Primates and the other Instruments of Unity to remain in full communion with the Primates, the Archbishop of

Canterbury and the Anglican Communion during any suspension of the Anglican Church of Canada.

- g) are *not* making plans or building an ecclesial structure to be used in the event the Anglican Church of Canada should choose to “walk alone”.

Federation aims and objectives:

1. As members of Anglican Essentials Canada (Federation), we seek -

- a) To recover the foundational principles of Anglicanism in Canada and to work for their reinstatement in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada.
- b) To help co-ordinate the vision and determination of orthodox Anglicans in Canada to remain faithful to the truth of the Gospel.
- c) To provide education on the orthodox understanding of the Christian mind, heart and life for the equipping of the saints.
- d) To encourage study of the historic Anglican formularies as well as modern restatements of the Anglican understanding of the Christian faith which defer to them, such as the Montreal Declaration of Anglican Essentials.
- e) To be a voice for faithful Canadian Anglicans to the wider Anglican Communion.
- f) To work for reconciliation and common mission with churches in the Anglican tradition that are not presently in communion with the See of Canterbury.
- g) To mobilize prayer for the renewal of the Anglican Church of Canada.
- h) To promote the work of Evangelism

Membership in the Anglican Network in Canada (the “Network”)

Membership in the Network is for those Canadian Anglicans who:

- a) are in a state of “serious theological dispute” and impaired or broken communion with the Anglican Church of Canada or their diocesan bishop;
- b) may desire Adequate Episcopal Oversight from a Network bishop;
- c) may determine that on theological grounds they cannot contribute financially to or participate fully in their diocese or the Anglican Church of Canada;
- d) wish to be recognized by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the global Primates as full members of the Anglican Communion; and
- e) will work in submission to the Primates to remain in full communion with the Primates, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Communion during any suspension or removal of the Anglican Church of Canada from the Anglican Communion.

Activities of the Network

Members of the Network understand that the Network is building an ecclesia! body (a “lifeboat”) to be available in the event the Anglican Church of Canada walks apart from the global Communion, and such a structure is required by the Primates as necessary to become fully recognized members in the Anglican Communion.

The Network will continue *efforts* to build bridges and partnerships with biblically faithful Anglicans in North and South America, as well as around the world, in order to strengthen our relationships with the global Anglican Communion and to share in and learn from the faithful leadership and ministry of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Network will continue to work and act in submission to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates of the Anglican Communion while the Anglican Church of Canada is in a state of temporary or permanent suspension from the Anglican Communion.

In the event there is a formal global schism and the Anglican Communion splits into two parts, the Network will align with the group which upholds the orthodox view of scripture.

Understandings

Members of the Network understand that:

- a) the Network is not yet an ecclesiastical body and will not launch such a body unless required by the Primates to re-establish full communion status with the “Church of England throughout the world” as set out in the Solemn Declaration of 1893.
- b) the Network has not left the Anglican Church of Canada, but exists to support those Canadian Anglicans in a state of “serious theological dispute”, and impaired or broken communion with the Anglican Church of Canada or their diocesan bishop.
- c) the Network does not desire to leave the Anglican Church of Canada but insists that the true Anglican Church of Canada must be in full communion with the global Anglican Communion.
- d) therefore, the Network denounces and stands apart from any actions or decisions of the leadership and governing body of the Anglican Church of Canada which leads to the suspension or severing of communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Expectations

All members of the Network must subscribe to the Declaration of Member of the Anglican Network in Canada, complete an Application for Membership in the Anglican Network in Canada (Parts One and Two), and commit to support the ministry of the Network to the best of their ability, through prayer and with financial and/or human resources. Membership is subject to the acceptance of the Membership Committee of the Anglican Network in Canada, in its sole discretion.

Conclusion

The Conference concluded with a tremendously uplifting and exciting celebration of the Holy Eucharist followed by the saying of goodbye and fair-thee-well to many old, renewed, and new friendships. All in all the Open Door Conference was an affirming and encouraging event that provides orthodox Anglican Christians with a platform from which to launch the future in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.