

THE BISHOP'S CHARGE

PART II

We journey on by stages



139th Session of the Diocesan Synod of
Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island

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Introduction

We gather in this 139th Session of Diocesan Synod with a theme of journeying on by stages. It is drawn from the story of Abraham's call. The Lord said to Abraham, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" [Genesis 12:1]. "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him . . . and journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb" [Genesis 12:4,9].

In the last number of years, "journey" has been very much a theme of our life in the diocese. At my installation I invited the diocese to "Come and Journey" -- to take some time to discern together where God is calling us to go; in new directions, toward new landscapes and into territories that challenge yet intrigue us. Through an extensive diocesan-wide process of consultation we identified four areas requiring considerable attention:

- Developing Healthy Congregations
- Organizing Ourselves for Effectiveness in Administration and Program
- Embracing Youth
- Forming People for Ministry

In each of these areas, we have made considerable progress, in large measure through our Committee of Chairs of Standing Committees and their commitment to work together in advancing our Renewed Vision; our Leap for Faith Capital Campaign; and our participation in Letting Down the Nets, an initiative of the National Church for educating and empowering church leaders to improve the on-going financial capability of the Church of God's mission through all circles of the Church -- parish, diocesan and national.

Through a number of presentations in this Synod, we shall mark our progress, noting how "stage by stage" we are, with God's help, making our way forward. It is not my intention here to say a lot about the details of many of the initiatives that have been underway. I shall leave that to the presenters. What I hope to do is set our work on number of fronts in a broader context, and identify what I believe are some significant on-going challenges. And I hope we will leave this Synod strengthened for that journey to which God continually calls us . . .

upward in praise and prayer;
inward in lives of holiness;
outward in loving service;
and onward through time

Developing Healthy Congregations

I want to acknowledge several factors that have helped us advance this goal in the diocese.

First is the concept of **Parish Profiles**, developed at the time a parish is beginning the process for appointment of a new rector.

Second is the concept of **Covenants in Ministry** through which we make commitments in shared ministry and mutual support.

Third is the **Fresh Start** program for clergy and parishes marking new beginnings in ministry. A number of clergy have received training for this program and are introducing it throughout the diocese. This year a number of lay leaders will also receive training.

Fourth is the superb work done by **The Rev'd Alice Mann** during the time she served as our consultant from the Alban Institute. Many of you will recall her presentations at Synod in the last few years. Alban's Five Marks of a Healthy Church have served us well. They are indelibly imprinted on many of our hearts and minds:

- I. Our members know who they are before God.
- II. Our members know what they are called to do.
- III. Our parish has the resources and leadership necessary to carry out its calling.
- IV. People experience the power and energy of the Gospel in their worship and life together.
- V. The activities of our parish make discernible differences in lives of individuals, families, and in the larger world around us.

Alban's Life Cycle of a Congregation has challenged many of us to acknowledge where we are in that cycle, to wrestle with issues over which we struggle from deep within, and to make decisions requiring much courage and grace.

Fifth is the wonderful work that **Janet Marshall, Senior Consultant for *Potentials East***, is doing throughout the diocese facilitating and resourcing conversations with respect to visioning the future. She has been working with the Anglican Churches in Pictou County, the parishes of Liverpool and Eagle Head, Shelburne, Lockeport and Barrington, Lunenburg, St. John's Halifax, Birch Cove, Westwood Hills; and in two regions - Chebucto and Fort Sackville - where in each several parishes are working together in discerning God's call for their future in ministry.

Janet has also begun to facilitate a visioning process for the Cathedral Church of All Saints. As the Cathedral Church is both home to the congregation that worships there regularly and home for the entire diocesan family, the process will include a congregational and diocesan component. A Steering Committee is in place to guide the process through the congregation. To begin a diocesan-wide consultation with respect to the role of the Cathedral in the diocese, what we look for in our Cathedral Church, and how we support its mission, the Dean and Chapter has set aside a significant block of time at its Annual Meeting in November. When both the congregation and diocese as a whole have had their say, a Profile will be developed, and we shall then begin the search for a new Dean.

For the costs associated with all these endeavours in visioning, parishes can apply for up to 50% of the costs associated with consultant fees. That is made possible through new monies raised in our Leap for Faith Capital Campaign. This is a good example - one of the best, in fact - of the diocese showing support for parishes venturing into visioning for the future.

Sixth is a **Bench-Marking Study** anchored by Morag Townsend this summer. Made possible though a grant from the HRSD Canada Summer Career Placement Program, this project included the collection of demographic and financial data from Annual Returns of parishes. Analysis of this data will help us with the development of healthy and sustainable ministries through realistic goals for parishes and regions.

By way of reflection and challenge, I want to share some thoughts from the Winter 2006 edition of the Alban Institute's periodical called Congregations.

Pastor and author Anthony Robinson, in his article "This Thing Called Church," says it concerns him that "literature on what it takes to create healthy congregations includes a great deal on systems theory, leadership studies, conflict management, and a variety of other approaches [all of which are helpful and valid] but . . . little attention is paid to ecclesiology – the theology of church. . . "The very word *ecclesiology* comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means "a people called" and "the visible assembly."

Robinson refers to Lutheran Pastor Michael Foss who "argues that the central challenge facing many congregations today is to shift their dominant paradigm from being cultures of membership to cultures of discipleship. . . The point is not membership. The church does not have clients, members, or consumers of goods and services. The point is discipleship. The church exists to form and sustain individuals and a people who are followers of Jesus Christ . . . The church transforms people according to the life and pattern revealed by God in Jesus Christ. It unites them with others who are committed to this way of life."

He concludes his article by saying, "Our challenge, therefore, as we consider how to create vital, healthy congregations for the future, is to help congregations regain - or gain for the first time - theological content, integrity, and passion" grounded in discipleship.

In the same edition of Congregations, there was another article entitled "Border Crossings." The Rev'd Marcia Bailey writes, "This is a tumultuous time in the life of our congregations. . . We find ourselves in a border land, somewhere between what has been and what is yet to be. What we know while safe, may also be restrictive. What we envision, while enlivening, is also risky. . . Are we taking risks and experiencing joy as we live daringly into the future or are we circling the wagons, holding the fort, protecting ourselves with all that is reassuring, comforting and safe? How do we as congregations cross borders and journey freely into a new and promised land?"

"For many congregations this is an exciting and frightening border on which to stand. Like the Israelites in Egypt, we discover that in the face of the uncertain, what we already know can be a sad relief. Daring to imagine the possibilities of God's desire for us will lead us on a wild and amazing journey. Will we insist on remaining safe or dare to be alive? How we listen and respond to God's invitation could mark our rebirth or our death."

By way of challenge, I also cite a March 2006 document from the Diocese of British Columbia, entitled Conversations on our Shared Future: A Preliminary Report. It uses as a reference point the 2001 report accepted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland known as "Churches Without Walls." The report "aims to provide a vision for the Church, relevant to every part of the Church over many years. At its heart it is about changing mind sets" . . .

- From Church focus to Christ focus
 - ↳ following Jesus to see what church forms around Him
- From settled Church to Church as movement
 - ↳ going where people are rather than waiting for people to come
- From a culture of guilt to a culture of grace
 - ↳ freeing people to love and be loved while not counting to the cost

- From running congregations to building communities
 - ↳ working toward a relational reformation
- From isolation to interdependence
 - ↳ encouraging churches to work together
- From individualism to teamwork
 - ↳ seeing teamwork as essential to all ministry
- From top down Church to upside down Church
 - ↳ putting the local church at the center of the agenda
- From centralized resources to development resources
 - ↳ releasing funds to encourage local vision
- From faith as security to faith as risk
 - ↳ looking for new courage to break out of old routines

These principles undergirded a thorough review of parish configurations in the Diocese of British Columbia resulting in the categoring of every parish according to the following definitions:

Healthy Parishes

- Congregation represents the local community demographically
- Have a clear vision
- Stewardship is evident
- Are financially stable
- Offerings are above diocesan average of \$1,000 person per annum

Parishes at Crossroads

- Have some of the characteristics of Healthy Parishes, but
- Have a weakness in one or more areas
- Correcting weaknesses needs to be a priority in the next 3 years

Parishes Needing Support

- Have some of the characteristics of Healthy Parishes and in recent past may have had more
- Have several areas of weakness now
- Correcting areas of weakness may require external support
- In the case of "strategic" ministries, this support may need to be long term

Parishes to be Amalgamated or Relocated

- Have shown little or no growth in the last few years
- Present site offers no growth potential
- Have declining attendance
- Are in the wrong location
- Are not financially sustainable
- Offerings are below the diocesan average of \$1,000 per head per annum
- Ministry can be provided by others
- Are not the best use of diocesan resources

Parishes to be Disestablished

- Mission has disappeared

- Are financially unsustainable
- Have no outreach
- Are in the wrong location
- Ministry can be done by others

New Ministries

- These could include church relocation, church planting, storefront ministry, home groups as well as possibly within institutions [university, college, hospital, correctional]
- Established in areas of present and future growth within the diocese

I believe it is imperative that we undertake a similar kind of study in our diocese, and that by the next regular session of Synod in 2008, a report be placed before us. The Bench-Marking Study to which I referred earlier is a good start for such a project.

Critical to healthy congregations is good stewardship of all our resources for mission and ministry – our time, our talents and our treasure. I am so pleased that the focus of the Letting Down the Nets initiative in our diocese is on a comprehensive approach to stewardship. It is so long overdue. We are not unlike another diocese participating in this program whose bishop says, “Parishes in our diocese are facing a multitude of challenges. One thing is certain -- without an active biblically based stewardship program, the resources we need to become the Church we are called to be just won’t be available. Now with the Letting Down the Nets initiative we can at last move forward.” With you, members of Synod, I look forward to the report of the Stewardship Resources Development task group. I am grateful for their initiative in having Bruce Rockwell as our keynote speaker for Synod. I formally welcomed him in Part I making reference to his work entitled, Spirituality and Money: Seven Questions that Saved My Life. Bruce will challenge us “to whether, in fact, our view of money may be a significant spiritual issue or whether it may even be the chief spiritual issue in our lives.” I have a sense that through his style of presentation, we’ll be listening, laughing and learning together a way of living and giving grounded in a theology of abundance and hope.

Inextricably tied to Healthy Congregations is the subject of Clergy Health and Well-Being. I am indebted to Bishop Sue and the Commission I put in place for the good work they continue to do in the interest of health and well-being. In particular, I refer to the new guideline for Healthy Parish Life which replaces the one for Expectations of Clergy and one for Expectations of Parishes. I applaud their efforts to encourage clergy to lead healthy, wholesome, balanced lives, and I call on every parish to support their clergy in that effort. Such support lends integrity to the response of the Church at the time of ordination:

Officiant Is it your will that *N* be ordained a deacon/priest?

Response It is.

Officiant Will you uphold *him/her* in this ministry?

Response We will.

I am impressed by the work of the Commission in preparing a new guideline for Professional Development for Clergy. I am pleased that a number of clergy have been engaged in continuing education programs of varying duration, and I encourage others to take advantage of that opportunity. For my own part, I confess that it has been far too long since I did a serious piece of continuing education. It is my intention, as you know, to take a three-month sabbatical next year -- August, September and October. It will include a full vacation, programs at the Anglican Centre in Rome and at the Education Centre in Canterbury, as well as a time of quiet in Iona. I look forward to his time away with much anticipation, and I hope to return rested and refreshed.

One of the pressing needs in our diocese is an annual opportunity for our clergy to come together in a three to four day residential conference. The last time we were able to do this was in 2002. Regrettably a lack of funding has prevented us from having one since. Next year a conference is set for November 6-8. I shall once again be calling on the parishes to cover a portion of the costs for their clergy to attend. In the future, I hope that provision for an annual clergy conference will be considered a given in the diocesan budget. It is absolutely vital to our health and well-being as individuals and as a college of clergy that we have this opportunity to come together for worship, study, fellowship and mutual support.

Organizational Effectiveness

Under this heading I simply draw to your attention to the fact that through the "Letting Down the Nets" initiative, three major concerns were identified as requiring our immediate attention:

- Communication
- Organizational Structure
- Allotment

I am pleased to report that with respect to each a plan is in place to address it.

A Communication Task Group has been convened and will report to Diocesan Council in June 2007. Their mandate, in working with a National Church consultant, will be to develop a communication strategy for the diocese, making the most effective use of information technology. They are to make recommendations and provide advice with respect to implementing them.

The call for a review of our Corporate Structure has come from both within the diocese through our Strategy Planning Committee and from beyond the diocese through the observation and counsel of The Rev'd Canon Geoff Jackson, Senior Development Officer for the Anglican Church of Canada, and The Rev'd Rob Waller, Project Consultant for "Letting Down the Nets" in our diocese. At the September meeting of Diocesan Council, a proposal for how we might address this matter, submitted by Janet Marshall, was approved. The work will focus our conversations toward a Corporate Structure that enables us to move forward with the goals of our Renewed Vision.

The call for attention to concerns about allotment was two-fold -- one is immediate and the other longer term. The one addresses the significant number of parishes who are in substantial arrears with respect to their capacity for supporting the work of the Church beyond the parish itself. It is the 5/3 Plan which I addressed in a pastoral letter to have been read in every parish in May and which appeared in the June issue of the Diocesan Times. The agenda for those parish meetings is set, teams for the diocesan delegation to visit have been chosen and orientated for their work, and all the meetings are being scheduled to take place in November. The other one addresses the deeper issue of an approach to allotment that is, as Geoff Jackson says, "simple and fair, equitable for all, understood by all, and embraced by all." I am happy to report that a task group has been convened to further this conversation. Their intent is to create a proposal and send it out to the regions for comment and feedback. They are committed to accomplish this work over the course of the next year with an eye to changes coming into effect for the fiscal year 2008.

I am grateful to everyone who has accepted my invitation to be members of the task groups to which I have referred under these headings of Communication, Organizational Effectiveness and Allotment. I hope that through their various tasks the diocese will be seen to have both heard and addressed concerns in ways that are of long-term benefit to putting our house in good order.

Embracing Youth

I begin with a statement from Bishop Sue, quoted in a brochure that speaks about youth ministry in our diocese:

Youth have a major role to play in our diocesan journey of renewal, to fulfill our call to be a Christ-centered, mission-minded ministering community of faith. The church is fully the Body of Christ when all ages of God's people are represented -- in worship, in decision making, and in taking the gospel out into the world.

Our diocese has a long history of honouring the place of youth. There is provision for youth at Parish Council, for every parish to elect a youth delegate to Synod. As a result of the Anglicans in Mission financial campaign in the early '80's we engaged a full-time Youth Ministry Coordinator for several years. Some of you will recall LiveWire. TEC is a well-established program. Again, I quote the brochure:

It is an annual three-day retreat on the essentials of our faith, centered on the Easter Story. The goal is to offer older youth and young adults an experience of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. A lively band, superb food, inspiring talks and foolish fun serve as avenues to bring the message of God's unconditional love to young adults.

That's the Spring event each year, and now we have an annual Fall event -- a residential conference at the Atlantic School of Theology. "It provides an opportunity for participants to explore spirituality among peers and to identify and strengthen areas of ministry that may be of interest to them."

Annually we send candidates to "Ask and Imagine," a program for young people in the Anglican Church from all over Canada. It's more than a camp, it's more than a youth conference -- it's a 10-day experience of living and learning in community with other youth and adult mentors. Participants will experience . . .

- leadership
- social justice
- theology
- ministry skills
- hands-on ministry
- world issues
- outdoor adventure
- spiritual formation
- seeing a bigger picture

These conferences are nurturing young people in the call to follow Christ, giving them confidence in their rightful place in the Church, and stirring vocations to a variety of ministries, including the diaconate and the priesthood.

Committed to funding full-time staff position for youth ministry, Synod passed a resolution a couple of years ago requesting every parish to provide \$500 as seed money for the position. And then we included in the Case for Support for the Leap for Faith Capital Campaign provision for this position. And now Michael Janz has been appointed. He's off to a great start in his ministry for which he'll be formally commissioned by the youth delegates of Synod in the liturgy they lead tomorrow evening.

By way of reflection, I was intrigued by some research of Dr. Reginald Bibby. You will recall that some years ago his research painted a rather bleak picture of the Church in Canada. However, in a more recent publication in 2004 called Restless Churches, he described what he named as "early signs of renaissance of religion in Canada." There are, he said, "at least four empirical signs that God is stirring in the established churches, bringing about new life. More teenagers are involved, more

young adults are showing interest, reports of growing congregations are coming in from across Canada, and recent polls have show that attendance is on the upswing – from a low of 21% of Canadians going to church weekly in 2000 to 26% in 2003.”

“What typically characterizes growing congregations,” he writes, “is their strong emphasis on ministry to children, youth and young adults, and their effort to address the spiritual, personal and relational needs of people of all ages.” Pray, God, we have more churches like that.

Forming People for Ministry

In their endeavour to understand and then faithfully live out their baptismal vows, many, many Anglicans are participating in a variety of programs -- Alpha, Cursillo, Emaus, EFM, Every-Member Ministry workshops and a variety of diploma and certification programs through the Atlantic School of Theology and other colleges as well. More people than ever are reading theology and reflecting on ministry. Maylane Maybe, in her book All Who Minister, writes, "We learn our baptismal ministry through liturgy which means 'work for the people.' The Orthodox have a saying that when the Sunday liturgy is over, the weekday liturgy – the liturgy of our lives – begins. For liturgy in its true sense is much more than the work of the people who go to church: it is a public work accomplished not for ourselves only but for people who inhabit the world – the people we encounter in our household, work place, market place and neighbourhood . . . Walter Brueggemann writes, "Liturgy is not secret nor private, not about escaping nor withdrawing from the world; rather it is about world making, shaping our worldview into God's."

As the hymn "Will You Come and Follow Me" puts it: "Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?"

Wes Frensdorf, the late Bishop of Nevada and an early advocate of Total Ministry, suggested "we imagine the local unit of the church, the congregation as an ellipse, organized around two focal points. One represents the life of the church as it gathers for worship, learning and fellowship; the other represents the church in mission as it disperses for service in the world. There is an interplay," he wrote, "between these two, but one is not more important than the other nor is one complete without the other."

I see this view of the Church growing in the minds and hearts of many people. It is affecting for good our understanding not only of baptism, but also confirmation. Just think about the words of the Prayer for Confirmation in the BAS:

Strengthen, O Lord, your servant *N* with your Holy Spirit;
empower *him/her* for your service; and sustain *him/her* all the
days of *his/her* life.

It sounds to me like a prayer grounded in the work of the Spirit giving us strength to live out our baptismal promises, gracing us for some ministry or another, and guiding us throughout all of life.

I was in a parish recently where the candidates for confirmation were enrolled in the context of the Sunday liturgy. The candidates were asked if they would seek to know God's will in their lives and do it, and the congregation was asked if they would support the candidates through prayer and the example of their own lives. All said yes. In the front row sat an old gentlemen whose name was John. He was 90 years old and had come to church, with the help of his wife and a personal care worker, to witness the enrolling of his grandson who will be confirmed in January. I was so moved by his present and the effort he had made to be there that I held him up as an example, not only to the candidates, but to the entire congregation. At the end of the liturgy during the closing hymn, which happened to be "Will You Come and Follow Me?", I invited the candidates to come forward and meet John. He greeted each one by drawing their forehead to his and then kissing their hand. A lovely act of friendship in Christ crossing generational lines, uniting them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Moments such as these are as important as anything else when it comes to talking about our "Anglican" identity in Christ. I hope and pray John will be with us again in January when we pray for his grandson and others who renew their commitment to Christ in the context of confirmation.

Beyond the Rite of Confirmation I'm always delighted to pray for those who, after a considerable period of reflection, are wishing to re-affirm their baptismal vows. It is fascinating to hear their stories, their journey of faith, their discernment of a call to ministry of one kind or another, their work in Jesus' name and their desire to renew their devotion to it, and then to be humbled myself by the act of praying with and for them, ". . . , may the Holy Spirit, who has begun a good work in you, direct

and uphold you in the service of Christ and his kingdom." Friends, it is these moments of grace, these movements of the Spirit, these acts within the Community of Faith that are so precious alongside other things in an ever-emerging sense of Anglican identity in that call to discipleship which we share with so many others as the people of God baptized into Christ Jesus. And I suggest to you that these may well be moments, movements and acts that influence for a lifetime a faithful following of Christ.

I trust this reflection is in keeping with a predecessor in office, Harold Waterman, a much loved and respected bishop of this diocese. In the context of celebrations marking the Centenary of the Formation of a Synod for the diocese, he wrote, "Personal commitment and surrender to our Lord is fundamental to churchmanship. Such churchmanship must mean loyalty to our Lord in the fellowship of the Church not simply loyalty to the Church without personal loyalty to Him. We have a great task before us."

I am convinced that at the heart of our celebrations in 2010 is the remembrance of the love and loyalty, the devotion and the diligence, the courage and commitment of our forbears in faith, and our prayer that "our lives may be directed in the same spirit of service and sacrifice." That spirit is enshrined in a lovely way in the words of the prayer for the 2010 celebrations, written by Archbishop Peters:

Blessed are you Lord God, our Creator and Sustainer.
We thank you for your goodness towards us through the 300 years of
continuous worship and witness in this place.
Your steadfast love never ceases and your compassion never fails.
O Lord, as we journey onward, go before us with the blessing of your
goodness and remember us now as you have in ages past.
Give us minds and hearts that travel without fear into the mystery of
your being.
In this journey just begun, make us fruitful in your service,
sharing your love and joy and peace with all your children,
in the power of your Holy Spirit.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Anglican Identity

In addressing members of Provincial Synod recently, The Venerable Michael Pollosel, General Secretary for the Anglican Church of Canada, used an image that captured our imagination. He spoke of "comfort zones." First, he spoke of the comfort zones in his own life and ministry, and the several moments when, as a servant of the Church, he has been called to move beyond them into zones less comfortable, into terrain beyond his imagining. And then he spoke of zones into which we have been called to make a trek -- as parishes, as dioceses, as a national Church, as a worldwide Communion.

For some parishes the trek has led to a very different way of being Church; in shared ministry, through amalgamations. In our diocese I point to the courage and grace with which decisions have been made in Pictou County, Sydney and Annapolis. I anticipate a similar kind of courage and grace among some parishes in the Halifax area.

For the National Church the trek has led us in and through the tragic terrain of the legacy of involvement in the residential schools and the abuses incurred by so many within that inherently flawed system of "enculturation" of the indigenous peoples of this land into our way of life. The trek has led us into the jagged terrain of declining membership, slumping finances and the closing of many church buildings. The trek has led us into a place of questioning our capacity and more importantly the wisdom of maintaining ecclesial organization across the country that we can no longer sustain a wisdom borne, I believe, of what are known as "best practices in the stewardship of our resources for ministry and mission."

And internationally we are being drawn through a terrain uncharted in our life as a Communion of Churches worldwide. Issues of human sexuality, in particular homosexuality and the blessing of same-sex relationships have rocked the Communion. Whereas in someplace the very mention of such issues is taboo, perhaps even anathema; in others a lack of response is pastorally irresponsible on the part of the Church. In all our discussions nationally and internationally, in all our declarations about inclusion, in all our resolutions about honouring the place and contribution of gay and lesbian members of our churches we must never lose sight of the question asked by an International Conversation: "What constitutes loving and responsible care of the gay and lesbian members of our church?"

Within the Communion we have The Windsor Report: The Lambeth Commission on Communion to which the Provinces of the Communion are responding.

Within Canada we have the St. Michael Report, an opinion of the Primate's Theological Commission as to whether the matter of the blessing of same-gender relations is a matter of doctrine. They have concluded it is. They have made the distinction, however, that it is not creedal and that even though a matter of doctrine it ought not to be a "Communion breaker." The General Synod will receive and consider this opinion when it meets next year in Winnipeg. In the meantime every diocese has been requested by the Primate to study the Report and consider its opinion. Processes for dialogue have been put forward by the National Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee, and the Chair of the Commission, Bishop Victoria Matthews of Edmonton has traveled the country facilitating workshops on the St. Michael Report.

In May, Bishop Sue and I hosted a diocesan gathering on this report. We had a good day that included presentations by a panel of learned persons, opportunity for questions about the report and discussion in groups focused on its findings. The level of participation was high as was the request that the discussion be held more locally - in regions. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that The Rev'd Canon Eric Beresford, President of Atlantic School of Theology, is anchoring a Listening Process for continuing discussions about human sexuality. He is drawing together a group of theologically-diverse people who are committed to dialogue. By way of follow up to the St. Michael Report, they will facilitate workshops throughout the diocese. They will be helping us to listen respectfully to one another as we grapple with the topic of same-sex relations and blessings and encouraging us to listen to the voice and experience of gay and lesbian persons. I heartily endorse this conversation, and call on members of Synod to participate and encourage others to do so as well.

In that vast multitude of voices speaking to issues of sexuality, Communion and unity in Christ "who is our peace," we are blessed, I believe, to hear a few that are particularly broad-minded and well grounded in an appreciation of the nature of Communion as we have received, embraced and acknowledged how it continues to evolve through time. They name even deeper issues with which we are wrestling.

Archbishop Robin Eames writes, "It is debatable if the Anglican Communion has faced a more searching period, more public scrutiny and more transparent heart-searching than in the past two years. . . . But I have to ask whether the debates we have seen are about the real issues which confront the Anglican Communion? . . . Has the Anglican obsession with sexuality been merely the tip of an iceberg hiding other deeper issues which will ultimately dictate the future of the Anglican Communion?"

In a lecture delivered at Virginia Theological Seminary and printed in our Ministry Matters publication, Archbishop Eames speaks of the historical context out of which current tensions have emerge. "The words 'bonds of affection' are the most overworked attempt to describe what has held the Anglican Communion together. These words have been a useful but not necessarily a clinical description of how a truly international body of autonomous Provinces could relate. . . . They were adequate when agreement existed simply because there was no division. But they proved inadequate when pressures built up. As divisive issues surfaced they became what bound together only those Provinces which agreed with each other."

He then goes on to speak of the nature of those pressures, referring to colonialism to its eclipse through the emergence of local autonomy. "Growth of autonomous confidence with its jealous protection of cultural as well as doctrinal freedom inevitably asked questions about the structures which allowed 'bonds of affection' to continue. All was well when there was general agreement. The distress signals arose when we did not agree on everything. . . . what alarms me about our current crisis is the failure to engage in dialogue on an agreed playing field between two apparently opposing views. If Anglicanism is to maintain a global community dialogue on an agreed transparent basis is essential."

In the preparation of the Windsor Report, he said his impressions of the Communion were dominated by one word -- pain. It abounds on all sides of the issues that threaten to divide us. He says, "Calls for remedies for this current crisis abound. They range from protection of minority parishes in dispute with the attitude of their bishop to high level commissions such as the Lambeth Commission I had the privilege to lead. But let me dwell on one aspect of a solution of which I have some experience within my work in Northern Ireland. I refer to the concept of reconciliation:

First, reconciliation cannot be enforced. Reconciliation comes when parties wish to be reconciled.

Second, reconciliation involves pain just as the situation to be reconciled causes hurt.

Third, reconciliation does not mean the total achievement of individual aims. It speaks of honest compromise.

Fourth, reconciliation involves recognition of the possible and acknowledgement of difference.

"The process of reconciliation means a genuine attempt at listening and understanding. It means no longer talking at one another but talking with one another."

In the face of broken relationships among and within Provinces, a renewed commitment to reconciliation would enable us to go some distance, step by small step, toward what Eames calls "the practical working out of communion" in the face of difference.

Another voice worthy of hearing is that of the Archbishop of Cape Town, Njongonkulu Ndungane. In July, he issued a statement entitled, "Heartlands of Anglicanism."

What does it mean to be Anglican? What is it about Anglicanism that has led so many to conclude that it provides the most productive spiritual soil for living out the Christian faith? What is it that we have, which we dare not lose?

Archbishop Rowan offers his own description of our distinctive Christian inheritance. This he depicts as having the three strands of 'reformed commitment to the absolute priority of the Bible for deciding doctrine, a catholic loyalty to the sacraments and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and a habit of cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility that does not seek to close down unexpected questions too quickly.'

It is indeed within the territory encompassed by these strands that I find my own experience and understanding of Christianity. These describe the rich heartlands of Anglicanism – the solid centre, focused on Jesus Christ, to which we are constantly drawn back by the counterbalancing pull of the other strands, if any one threatens to become disproportionately influential.

These Anglican heartlands are the subject of my reflections – the historic fertile middle ground, which is in danger of being forgotten amid polarising arguments and talk of schism.

This is an enormously important matter for the Church requiring our attention and our best efforts. "Whatever happens at this Convention," said one visitor to ECUSA's National Convention in July of this year, "I hope that it is bringing the message of the ministry of reconciliation. I believe there should be a whole series of venues for conveying this message. I believe bishops should pepper their congregation with pastoral letters about the importance of the ministry of reconciliation. I believe that at the parish level, there should be all kinds of forums and sermons and materials available on the subject, and I think that our great thinkers should help us reclaim this ministry of reconciliation and do a much better job of fleshing it out . . . If we can't hold ourselves together, it's hard to see how we can present ourselves as a force to hold the world together, and if we can't exchange the peace with one another, it's hard to explain to people how we purport to be agents of peace." Wise counsel, it seems to me, for the Episcopal Church, the Canadian Church; indeed, the entire Communion.

HIV/AIDS

No part of the world is unaffected by it, and no part is more affected by it at present than in the developing countries. The overwhelming majority of people with HIV, some 95% of the global total, live in the developing world. In the Spring 2006 edition of Ministry Matters, Zaida Bastros writes, ". . . the dour reality of AIDS in Africa is that it is intrinsically linked to poverty and in Africa, women are the poorest of the poor. All statistics agree: women are the group most affected by AIDS in Africa. . . As well as poverty, their vulnerability to HIV infection is related to biological differences, the sexual behaviour of their partners, the exercise of power, social attitudes and pressures in a context where poverty has a feminine face."

The United Nations has declared HIV/AIDS to be the greatest single threat to humankind. It is a disease demanding our immediate attention. UN Ambassador for HIV/AIDS, Stephen Lewis, has described religious leaders as a "sleeping giant" with the ability to influence leaders of the industrialized nations. "Churches," he said, "can lay claim to addressing the spiritual as well as the physical dimensions of people's lives in the face of the immense suffering and death resulting from HIV/AIDS."

At the May 2006 meeting of the Governing Board of the Canadian Council of Churches, the following resolution was adopted:

We invite all our churches

- to shun all prejudice toward people with HIV,
- to root out social stigma and discrimination against all people living with HIV/AIDS,
- to support all who dedicate themselves to caring for people living with HIV and AIDS,
- to promote all kinds of appropriate behaviours that prevent the spread of the virus,
- to work to make lifesaving medicines accessible to all who need them, and
- to work to cancel the debt of countries with high prevalence of HIV rates [recognizing that poor economic circumstances are a powerful determinant in the quality of life of an HIV patient].

In light of the example and promise of the resurrection, celebrating life, we invite all our churches to care for one another regardless of circumstances and to renew a more just and peaceful home for God's people.

God Our Creator, Redeemer, Advocate, come quickly.

In August, Canada hosted the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto, under the theme "Time to Deliver." The Rev'd Dawn Dickieson and Karen Moulton from our diocese attended the conference, and I look forward to their reflections tomorrow evening.

As a National Church, we have a huge commitment, in partnership with other churches, to addressing HIV/AIDS. Our Primate has called on all Anglicans to learn, pray and give through the 2004 initiative known as "Partnership For Life: A Generation Without AIDS." It is pleasing to note that the goal of \$1Million has been surpassed, and that this campaign continues to receive strong support across the country.

In 2006, we have another initiative in the form of a photo exhibit entitled, "Facing AIDS, Facing Reality." Unveiled in Toronto in August, it is now available for bookings across the country, and I am especially pleased that we were able to secure it for Synod. I encourage you to spend time

contemplating the images it portrays. An abundance of resources accompany this exhibit and, in the interest of learning, praying and giving, I encourage you to take them home.

Speaking of home . . . home in our diocese, in your region and in your parish . . . in the diocese we have an incredibly gifted and committed Coordinator for PWRDF, Ann Kilby, from the Parish of Port Hill in P.E.I. Ann is very dedicated to her role and has done a lot of traveling throughout the diocese. But Ann is only one person; she cannot do everything. I believe the diocese needs two coordinators -- one on the Island and one in Nova Scotia -- who will work together. We need to rebuild a strong PWRDF Committee that supports a whole team of regional coordinators who, in turn, work with coordinators in every parish for highlighting awareness of the work of PWRDF and calling for generous support. At no time in history is such a need more great. Our care and concern, our compassionate response, and our commitment to break the cycles of poverty that in turn are perpetuating the pandemic of HIV/AIDS is in keeping with a baptismal vow we share with other Christians. In any portrait of Anglican identity in the world, I hope such care, concern and commitment would require a very broad stroke of the artist's brush.

I conclude this call for renewed support for PWRDF and its work with HIV/AIDS in Canada and throughout the world with a prayer written by the Maryknoll Sisters of San Salvador:

God of all compassion,
comfort your children
who live with HIV.
Spread over us all your gift of mercy, love and peace.
Open our eyes to your presence
reflected in their faces.
Open our ears to your truth
echoing in their hearts.
Give us the strength
to walk with the grieving,
to walk with the lonely,
to stand with the depressed.
May our love mirror your love
for those who live in fear,
who live under stress and
who suffer rejection.
Mothering, fathering God,
grant rest to those who have died
and hope to all who live with HIV.
God of life,
help us to find the cure now
and help us build a world in which
no one dies alone
and where everyone lives
accepted, wanted and loved.
Amen.

Conclusion

In concluding Part II of the Charge, I draw our attention back to Abraham -- to God's call in his life, to his response, to his journey and resting places, to those places where he paused to build an altar that he might make thankofferings for blessings received and pray to God for continuing guidance.

Like Abraham, we pause to chart our movement, to see how "stage by stage" we are making our way forward in a journey of renewal. And with Abraham, we pray for continuing guidance that we may become the people God intends us to be, giving ourselves more and more to the good works to which we are called at home and abroad.

In the spirit of the truth that he/she who sings, prays twice, I conclude with the words of a hymn from Common Praise [#468]:

To Abraham and Sarah
the call of God was clear:
"Go forth and I will show you
a country rich and fair.
You need not fear the journey,
for I have pledged my word
that you shall be my people
and I will be your God."

From Abraham and Sarah
arose a pilgrim race,
dependent for their journey
on God's abundant grace;
and in their heart was written
by God this saving word,
"That you shall be my people
and I will be your God."

We of this generation
on whom God's hand is laid
can journey to the future
secure and unafraid,
rejoicing in God's goodness
and trusting in this word,
"That you shall be my people
and I will be your God."



The Right Reverend Fred J. Hiltz
Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island