

Taking Our Future Seriously



by Peter Klenner and Paul Woehrlé



Anglican Agenda Series ♦ J.I. Packer, editor

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Preface To The Series

The Anglican Agenda series of publications aims to open up current questions that call for thought, discussion, prayer and decision among members of the Anglican Church of Canada at this time. The series is sponsored by the Essentials movement, which seeks all-round renewal of life and strength in the Anglican Church, and its writers are Anglican Church personnel speaking out of their loyalty to the Church and their acute sense of its present needs. It is hoped that the series will spark deep personal reflection and group discussion within and between parishes, so that we all may be better prepared for the difficult and demanding era into which, as it seems, our Church is now entering.

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For some time a group of friends had been meeting together in pain and in hope. Their pain sprang from two sources. One was the current crisis of official Anglicanism world-wide over the question of blessing same-sex unions: a dispute raising in an acute form the deeper question, whether the authority of the Bible establishes absolutes of belief and behaviour (the historic Christian view) or not (the modern revisionist view). The second source of pain was the sense that across the board the Anglican Church of Canada is in a less than healthy state and is going downhill fast, losing members, closing buildings, cutting back on budgets and personnel, and focusing so hard on maintenance and keeping going as to lose sight of the God-taught urgency of mission and outreach to people who need Christ and have not yet found him. Then the hope of the group rested, as it rests still, on the certainty that God is not dead, nor has he finished with Anglicanism in Canada, so that we may look to him to use faithful, wise and prayerful action as he has done before, to bring new life to the church where new life is needed. Out of this mix of pain and hope came a memorandum of encouragement that in 2005 was submitted to a pan-Canada members' conference of the Essentials movement. The heart of this memorandum was drafted as follows:

Our vision is of a Canada-wide church in which

- **bishops** give biblically sound and spiritually weighty leadership oriented to unity and sanctity in the truth and to outreach with the truth;
- **young people**, both from church families and from outside, are challenged, motivated, educated and trained, to become all-out disciples of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ;

- **theological colleges** nurture, mentor and equip their students to teach Bible truth to their congregations for their maturity, to train layfolk for their ministry, and by this means to quicken congregations as worshipping, witnessing, and welcoming communities;
- **congregations** reach out with courage, competence and credibility to share with others, near and far, their own knowledge of the truth and power of their Saviour.

To work for this large and composite goal must involve us in

- creating awareness throughout the church as to how we have lapsed from biblical and historic Anglican ideals, and what needs to happen for the recovery of our heritage and the revitalizing of our church life;
- sustained educational effort to ground everyone in biblical, theological and liturgical basics, which will necessitate, over and above teaching from the pulpit, recovery of lifelong catechesis for Anglicans of all ages;
- servicing youth leaders and youth pastors with resources and fellowship structures (conferences, etc.) that may equip them to disciple and hold on to each rising generation better than at present;
- providing resources for planting churches and rebooting congregations that have lost sight of essential elements of the gospel and the church's mission;
- establishing leadership training for both clergy and gifted laypeople as a permanent, church-wide project;
- providing a flow of teaching resources on sexual ethics and family life;
- fostering vocations to ordained pastoral ministry, e.g. by use of apprenticeship schemes, and providing supplementary resources according to need for ordinands, whose training may leave them short of skills in theology, expository preaching, and spiritual dealing;

- provision of topical regional conferences as needed in major urban centres.

This memorandum is in effect offering an answer to two questions. First, what would a spiritually renovated ACC look like? Second, what is needed, structurally and organizationally to make it possible to get there from where we are now? What the paragraphs quoted set forth is a vision—a dream, if you like—but the Bible itself says, with regard to the promises of God that the prophets held forth, that where there is no vision the people perish (Pr. 29:18), and experience has shown over and over again that where there is a vision, that is a shared group expectation of what their God may in mercy do in their midst, the people of God thrive. Could a lack of vision—just that—be one of the main problems facing the ACC today? The following discussion, taking its rise from the memorandum, seeks to offer the vision we need.

What the Crisis has Taught us So Far

Before we begin to discuss our future, we need to assess what God seems to be teaching us in the present. Through the tensions of the past few years, three things have become very clear. They are as follows:

First, **not all turmoil and disorientation is outside of God's purpose.** Recall the gospel story of the disciples out in a boat with Jesus on the Sea of Galilee at night in a storm (Mt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:35-41). The boat was filling with water: it was a crisis situation. After calming the storm Jesus said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Jesus used the situation to teach his followers a lesson, calling them to a new depth of trust in him in their trouble. Anglicans in Canada may take heart: we can be sure that God is still in our midst, and that the Father and the Son are still working to teach us lessons. As we experience the ups and downs of our situation, we should never forget that God is still running his world, and nothing takes him by surprise!

Could it be that God is using the storm in our church—his church, really—to test and check the focus of our faith? Who is the Lord of our lives at this moment? God looks for unconditional loyalty, trust and commitment in his children. If institutionalism gets in the way of that loyalty, we violate the second com-

mandment of the Decalogue, which forbids idolatry. To put our Anglican church before God and his Kingdom purposes would be a case in point. If we idolise our church and in effect worship it rather than its Lord, we sin grievously. Could it be that God's present agenda is to recall us from that?

Do we treat the word "Anglican" as a noun or an adjective? If we give it noun status, then we are Anglicans and nothing more, and all forms of Anglicanism will have equal status as the focus of our ultimate loyalty. Like those in the past who expressed their patriotism by saying, "My country, right or wrong," we shall be saying in our hearts, "Anglicanism, right or wrong," and we shall not even try to discern which versions of Anglicanism are good and which are not so good. If however "Anglican" is for us an adjective, then we shall see ourselves as Anglican "somethings"—Anglican Christians, in fact—and we shall measure our Anglicanism by the standards of authentic, historic, biblical Christianity. "Christians" describes our status before God—redeemed, justified, adopted, born again, members now in the body of Christ. "Anglican" will then refer to the way we express that status through liturgy, episcopacy, feeding on Scripture and fellowshiping in sacraments. To call oneself an Anglican Christian is to make the claim that the Anglican way matches the biblical standards of historic catholic Christianity, and to submit Anglican belief and behaviour, one's own and that of others, to be judged by the written Word of God, and to be reminded of how the Anglican tradition teaches us biblical priorities in serving God and our neighbour.

Second, **our current struggles force us to consider how we understand the nature of the church.** The Thirty-nine Articles in the *Book of Common Prayer* are the nearest thing to a confession of faith that the Anglican Church has ever produced, and Article 19 lays it down that, "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men"—believers, that is, of both genders; "faithful people" or "believing people" is how we should phrase it today. The "visible" Church is the one universal church of Christ as it becomes open to view wherever congregations are formed to do the things that according to Scripture the church does. Each congregation is called to be a true sample of what the church is, and the "believing people" who make it up, sharing its life and professing its faith, are to be taken at face value as parts of that

whole. But belonging to the visible church is not synonymous with being a real Christian, known to and acknowledged by God as such. The contrast here is between the church as we humans see it (hence “visible”) and the church as God alone, God the reader of hearts, sees and knows it. When the Reformers spoke of the “invisible” church, they meant those people within the visible church who have truly put their faith in Jesus, the crucified, resurrected, ascended and now reigning Lord; who are truly born again and regenerate and show it by a changed life; who do not just go through religious motions (Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or whatever) but who love Jesus and desire nothing more than everlasting holy fellowship with him and with the Father. “The Lord knows those who are his” (2 Tim. 2:19).

So the institutional setup of the congregation, whatever its denominational allegiance, can mask the fact that some who are involved may not yet be Christians in the full sense. Everyone is welcomed into the worship and common life of the institution, but they may still need to come to real faith. And though the institution may come to grief, the true church of God, the “invisible” church, will continue. Whatever the Anglican Church does, it will not harm or change the Body of Christ, of which Jesus is our head and to which all the genuinely born-again belong. Unlike the institutional church, the church of Christ cannot be orchestrated, organized, managed, controlled or split by human action. It is a living organism that feeds on the Word of God, breathes by the Holy Spirit, and moves in obedience to God’s will. It includes Christians of all denominations and is broader than any one Christian can appreciate. Whatever the future of any denominational group or structure, the church of Christ throughout the world will always be anchored in the heavenly Zion beyond this world (see Heb. 12:22-24), always be totally God-dependent, always be unified, and always be worshipping and obeying God. And the primary thing for all of us is to make sure that the church that God acknowledges, the true body of Christ, the true olive tree of God (see Rom. 11:17-22), is the church to which we belong.

Third, **we have come to see the immense importance of our historical rootedness.** The Anglican Church has a rich heritage of worship, of pursuing holiness, and of biblical faithfulness. Historic reformed Anglicanism—Anglicanism, that is, as reshaped

at the Reformation—has established itself as a Bible-based, Christ-centred, gospel-focused, pastorally oriented, episcopally guided, rationally managed, culturally aware, educationally purposeful, ecumenically open version of Christianity, and we today should be very thankful for this tradition of Christian existence, perhaps the richest and wisest in all Christendom. To be sure, historic Anglicanism has never had its institutional house fully in order, and does not have it so today; it has never managed to be a very tidy fellowship of faith. That is partly because so wide a range of opinions on secondary matters, and on the proper emphasis to give to some primary matters, has been under constant discussion throughout the past four centuries, and partly because our modern preoccupation with “things new,” both in theology and in ethics and pastoral care, has led the Anglicanism of the West away from some biblical values and principles to which we need to return. We now see the need to call Anglicans across our land to come again under the authority of Scripture and its Christ, to accept and bear with the continuing messiness of church life, and to pay attention to what God is actually doing in our midst as we minister within our imperfect institution. And do we need to come to a deeper repentance ourselves? Yes, that too.

Four Critical Factors

We intend now to focus on what seem to us to be the four critical factors in the recovery of health in our church. There is very much that we are already committed to do, and very much more that we need to commit ourselves to do, and very much to be distracted by, in the ACC today; so our first task is to distinguish between what is worth the investing of our time and thought, and what would ultimately divert our attention from eternal issues. We could spend an inordinate amount of time responding to proposals and challenges that, in the long run, will hardly affect our church’s spiritual condition. We believe, however, that here we identify four crucial realities that between them will shape our future with God, and determine the viability or otherwise of the ACC for generations to come. They are, 1. Our theological colleges and seminaries. 2. Our young people. 3. Our episcopacy (holders of the office of Bishop). 4. Our evangelism.

We offer our thoughts on these matters as ventures in strategic

thinking. Strategic thinking always has as its basis a long-term view. Certainly, the fulfilment of our vision for the future, as set forth here, will take time—a long time! So if we want to see our Anglican institution revived from the inside we must be patient, disciplined and focused.

Strategic thinking for our renewal must go beyond institutional realities. Ultimately, we are not simply seeking to revive the ACC. Rather, we want to see the kingdom of God extended in Canada. What we offer is a kingdom-of-God action plan. Our hope is to see the kingdom of God, the new gospel order of things under Christ, expanding in and through our church. We want to see people of faith being renewed and revived; non-Christians in our congregations and outside being drawn into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; colleges and seminaries forming the mind, character, aspirations and skills of true ministers of the gospel; and a leadership that models true godliness in direction and management and that depends on the risen Christ for its authority and purposes. We do not expect that the ACC or any other part of the Anglican Communion will ever get its ecclesiastical house entirely in order, and our vision for the future recognizes the likelihood that increased vitality will bring increased plurality and untidiness at the level of practice. Our present prayer simply is that God will raise up many strategists who will take ownership of this vision and commit themselves to the disciplines and strains of the long-term process, no matter what happens in the immediate future.

Let us now explore the four critical realities that we have singled out.

1. Our Theological Institutions

The genesis of what happens over the years to the people in the pew is ordinarily found in what happened in the theological teaching institutions years before. More often than not, the main reason why our priests are as they are, is that the schools where they were prepared for ministry were what they were. Ordinands at theological schools expect to be given, and are in fact given, resources for the long-term ministry on which they are about to embark, and the quality of these resources has far-reaching effects. Ordinands study, or at least should study, theology—God, Christ and the Holy Spirit; creation, sin and salvation; the church here and hereafter;

God's plan to renew the cosmos. They must study Scripture, where God himself tells the story of how he is realizing his redemptive plans, and prophets, psalmists and apostles share the understanding of those plans that God has given them, and Jesus Christ, the central figure in the plans, is presented—indeed, presents himself, through the interpreting and enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit by means of the written word. Ordinands also need to study the Christian life: ethics, life's journey, prayer, communion with God, spiritual disciplines, virtues and vices, use of sacraments and church fellowship. With that, they will have to study the church's tasks—mission, evangelism, pastoral care and counsel—and its polity—that is, its management, local, diocesan, provincial and pan-Anglican. What they have studied, and the ways in which their study has impacted them, will then go far to determine how henceforth they will view the world, humanity, God and the Bible, and this will shape the whole of their ministry. Naturally and inevitably, the clergy, as leaders and teachers, largely determine the theological trajectory and outlook of the local parish, and in this they regularly act out what they were given in seminary. The link between theological school and pew may not be obvious, but it is decisive. Fundamentally, then, the mind-set that marks the Anglican church, in Canada as elsewhere, is a reflection of its theological schools, and always will be—for better, or for worse.

Clearly, then, Anglican Christians should concern themselves with the health of these centres where the formation of tomorrow's clergy is the permanent agenda item. There are many ways in which we can actively support our Anglican schools. We suggest six, as follows:

- Pray that God will supply a wise and godly faculty for each school;
- Find ways to support their boards of directors, and if we are so gifted, play our part on those boards;
- Use our networks and connections to encourage godly persons with the necessary competence to apply for vacant faculty positions;

- Disciple young people with an eye to their fitness for ordained ministry, and if they have scholarly gifts, lay before them also the vocation of college teaching;
- Extend hospitality to theological students, pray for them, and encourage your church to offer field placements for their practical courses;
- Request parish visits from seminary faculty members, for information and dialogue about what they are doing and why.

Fruitful partnership between seminary and parish from which both sides benefit, can result.

In recent years, theological schools have tended to see themselves largely as laboratories for novelty, experiment, exploration of the latest ideas, both theological and devotional, and critical dissection of older orthodoxies, rather than as guardians of the tried-and-true and trainers of mainstream ministers for mainstream congregations, which is what most congregations are, or at least wish to be. This agenda for the seminaries was not entirely misguided; someone needs to assess the new ideas that emerge, and unscholarly naïvety about the faith is not good in pastors; but digestive tablets do no good where there has been no meal, and one cannot live well, or help others to live well, on a diet of disinfectants. The failure of eccentric liberal ideas to bring nourishment to the church has been widely verified in the parishes, and it is cause for thanksgiving that, by and large, the ACC is beginning cautiously to creep back to something like orthodoxy. We need to hope and pray that all our seminaries will become leaders in this trend, rather than try to hold it back; and we should speak out to this effect.

2. Our Young People

It is commonly said that young people are the future of the church, and that is a truism of the truisms, if not indeed a platitude of the platitudes. In baptism we declare that all the baptized are full members of Christ's church from that point on, and that is how they are to be regarded as we labour to nurture them into fully responsible Christian discipleship. And this is a task at which we must labour,

giving it everywhere high priority; for without a constant inflow of young people, worshipping, witnessing, and working in Christ's service, our churches will be relegated to a downward spiral of attrition as parishioners age, and cease to be, and are not replaced. In many smaller churches, indeed, this is the story already. But if we are willing to give youth ministry its proper priority, this need not be the story any more. Young people in the church have great potential to increase the vitality of congregations, to keep parish life vibrant and honest, and to see to it that first things are put first. It may indeed be that in the past young people were discouraged from feeling that in the church they had any significant role to play—in other words, were made to feel marginal and ancillary to the church's real life, whatever that might be — and that this encouraged their exodus. Today, however, it has become clear that the way of wisdom is to maximize young people's involvement in church life, and to take pains to show them that we want church life and Christian activity to be interesting and important to them, just as they themselves are interesting and important to us. Any parish that wants to be here in twenty years' time, extending God's kingdom, spreading the gospel and so counting for Christ, must give priority to youth work today.

Youth ministry is hard work, but is eternally rewarding. It requires skilled and devoted leadership, both volunteer and paid. Workers need to have a burning commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to young people, plus a catechist's passion to teach thoroughly the whole range of truths that Christians live by, plus a deep understanding of our ever-changing youth culture, with which they must engage and within which they must do their work. Youth workers for whom loving, teaching and nurturing (not just entertaining!) is the name of the game are the salt of the earth.

So what can we do to make adequate youth ministry happen in the place where we are?

We can begin by praying that God will give our parish and all parishes a burden of concern for the young people in our families and communities, and that he will show us where and how he is at work among young people already. Once that is discerned, our part is to join God in what he is up to. Sounds too simple? Before you draw that conclusion, try doing it! And when budget time rolls around, before we invest in the next building fund, capital

campaign or sanctuary spruce-up, consider investing in ministry to youth. Are we willing to dedicate significant resources to this cause? If no qualified youth worker is available to us, or if with the best will in the world we cannot afford to employ one, then let us without hesitation ask for help. There are many organisations in Canada with a focus on youth ministry which can give us help at this point. Let us bring in the experts, even if they are not Anglican! Many of their ministries are currently successful (check this out locally), and they will normally be very ready to assist us any way they can.

Ideally, we shall flank our youth work on the one side with a Sunday School, held maybe on Saturday or Monday (?!—yes, moving from Sunday morning sports time has in a number of cases paid off handsomely). We shall start with pre-schoolers and take boys and girls through a graded syllabus of Bible and doctrine (not Bible stories without doctrine, but both together) up to the point where they pass under the youth leader's care. Then, on the other side, it will be a happy thing if there are young adult groups, marrieds and singles perhaps, or college and career, to which they can in due course move on. Not all congregations can manage this at first, but it is great gain once it is in place, and it is a setup to pray and work for until it becomes reality. We see this as extremely important.

Like Martin Luther King, we too have a dream. We dream of a national youth rally of thousands of young Anglican Christians committed to thoroughgoing discipleship to Christ, and on fire for God to impact our country and indeed the world for their Saviour. We shall cherish our dream as we continue to plead that our churches make youth ministry a top priority.

3. Our Episcopacy

We recognize that the role of bishop is difficult at the best of times and we appreciate the generations of Canadian diocesan bishops who laboured unstintingly to maintain their dioceses as going concerns. However, the need for godly leadership continues year by year. It is our conviction that such positions should not just be left to circumstances, but that a process of grooming, discipleship and conscious mentoring should also take place.

We have observed that many clergy, when they think of epis-

copal ministry, relegate it to the category of the ultimate pastoral sacrifice, and firmly resolve to avoid it (that is, never to stand for election as a bishop). In view of the importance of the bishop's ministry, it seems to us most ironic that there should be so much reluctance to take it on, and we think this attitude needs to change. Bishops, first and foremost, are not just administrators and managers, but practitioners of significant spiritual relationships, as the chief pastors and pastoral leaders in their dioceses. Ideally, bishops will be protectors and preachers of the truth of the gospel; pioneers in motivating and facilitating the missional advance of Christ's kingdom through the church; supporters of clergy working in their dioceses in whatever way they need support; spokespersons for the church and for Christ in the community; reconcilers where congregations are divided, or clergyperson and congregation are estranged; and more. This is no mere human task, and one not to be envied. However, we cannot neglect the ongoing need for godly leadership in Canada. A bishop who embodies the range of qualities that make up authentic Anglicanism will be a leader and guide to ministers and churches in all the ways that Paul wanted Timothy to be in Ephesus long ago, and that will be a spiritual fact of great significance and benefit.

If we want to ensure in our episcopate a continuous flow of outstanding pastoral talent as described, where do we begin?

Here, in terms of our vision, is our answer.

First, we emphasize the importance of upholding Anglican doctrine, ethics and pastoral practice. Bishops are asked to withhold their private opinions while upholding the church's doctrines. The present Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is a model of one who has worked towards such a goal. The ability to work towards such disciplines takes time and training—it is not a character trait that just happens. We need to continue to invest time and money in people who have this capability.

Second, we need local congregations to see themselves as true units of mission, with a commitment to the episcopal structure and a willingness to invest in the recruiting, training, mentoring and developing of potential bishops. This needs to be done—not subjectively because someone is a “nice” person—but carefully and deliberately recognizing that the outcome of such a choice could one day lead to episcopal leadership.

Third, given what has been said so far, the task will be to reconceive episcopacy throughout the church as a teaching and leading rather than a mainly maintenance role, and to identify gifted younger clergy who display proven maturity, breadth of outlook and pastoral wisdom, who are making headway in parish ministry, who have sanctified natural talent to meet the demands and carry the burdens of leadership, and who are zealous for the glory of God through the spread of the gospel and kingdom of Christ. The claims of episcopal ministry as pastoral service should be put to them, and they should be—dare we say?—informally groomed for this possibility, through appropriate forms of mentoring and skills development. Aspiring to senior leadership, not for status but for service, is an honourable objective, and sustained reflection by the whole church on what we may properly look for in future bishops can do nothing but good. And if those who have invested time and energy in preparing, and being prepared, for episcopal ministry finally fail to achieve election to the office, their preparation will still pay handsome dividends as they continue in their own parochial situations.

4. Our Evangelism

The fourth critical factor in our future is evangelism. For many this word has negative connotations, but in itself it means simply the sharing of good news, and it is natural and right that Anglicans, like other Christians, should want to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the rest of the world. Unfortunately, many of us have been exposed to irresponsible evangelism in which people were manipulated into making an emotional, non-rational response to a quite inadequate account of what repenting of sin and becoming Jesus' disciple really means. We cannot wonder if burnt children now dread the fire. But there is such a thing as responsible evangelism, and we can all learn to share the good news responsibly. Responsible evangelism sees doing this as a privilege that expresses both obedience to Christ's command and love, concern, and thoughtful respect for other people. Certainly, the goal is not just to keep the church going, but rather to extend the kingdom of God in human lives; yet without new people joining our parish family—and not just those who are for the moment church-(s)hopping (a common thing in our consumer-oriented society)—it is obvious

that the church will continue to decline. Practising evangelism, however, both keeps our faith current and alert and results in new Christians finding a place to belong in our churches, so that they grow and mature as people who belong, and believe, and through the transforming power of Christ behave in ways that glorify God. Evangelism brings people who may never have been involved with the church into a new and living relationship with God through Jesus, and when that has happened they will, please God, recognize the church as home.

Evangelism is the life-blood of a parish, and is more straightforward than is sometimes thought. Many times all we need to do is invite people we know to come to church with us. Canon Harold Percy of Trinity Church, Streetsville (www.trinitystreetsville.ca) and the Wycliffe College Institute of Evangelism (www.wycliffecollege.ca), agree in telling us: "There are more people willing to accept an offer to come to church than are willing to make one."

What might an evangelism vision and strategy for the ACC look like?

Over the next twenty years we could, first, labour to make sure that all the members of our congregations clearly understand the gospel with which our Lord has entrusted us, and, second, implement a plan of responsibly asking every person in Canada whether they would like to explore a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Within a frame of responsible evangelism, every parish could play its part in mounting options for evangelistic ministries. We could draw on the expertise and experience of many Anglican evangelists both in Canada and overseas, and employ many different ministry styles. While no set programme can compete with one-to-another, one-on-one sharing, catechetical programmes like *Alpha* and *Christianity Explored* (for adults and young people), and *Quest* and *Nooma* (for youth) have proved to be helpful resources for many.

Professions of faith in Christ and commitment to the church must always lead on to full-scale, long-term discipling. Harold Percy defines discipling as the endeavour of helping people to live as Jesus taught we should, and insists that everything in evangelism rises or falls over the question of how seriously discipling is taken. "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Jesus' words, Mt. 28:20) is an activity that creates a climate in

which people sincerely desire spiritual advance and growth, and in that climate evangelism will most certainly continue to flourish.

For more on this subject, see *Taking Evangelism Seriously*, by David Edwards, in the present series.

Conclusion

Our hope and our prayer is that God will give us visionaries and strategists in abundance for the implementing of the four critical priorities that we have discussed. The continued existence of the ACC might actually depend on that happening, for if decline continues at the present rate there will be no ACC at all by the end of the twenty-first century. What we have envisaged in the foregoing pages may take twenty or thirty years to bring about in full, but we are convinced that with dedication and wisely directed effort it is all do-able, given the personnel for which we pray. If we can catch a glimpse of “the visible Church of Christ” as a congregation of faithful people, worshipping and working whole-heartedly for God in every place where a church is located, we can bring new hope—new life, indeed—to the ACC. God grant it!

Meantime, all of us must prayerfully ask ourselves:

Should I be actively involved in any way in giving short-term or long-term direction, with convictional clarity and formational purpose, to our theological schools?

Should I become a catalyst or a contributor to the growth and enhancement of the all-important youth ministries that our parishes need to maintain?

Should I seek to share in the informal selecting and equipping of priests who might in due course become bishops? And if I am already an ordained priest, should I be thinking in terms of seeking to fulfil a pastoral episcopal ministry at some future date, and seek to prepare myself for that possibility as of now?

Should I elevate evangelism to priority status in my life, and talk up the theme, stressing the dangerous threat of “ingrown eyeballs” leading to complacent unconcern about outsiders, and seek to overcome my own self-consciousness in asking people to come with me to church or study group, and make it my business to live each day with evangelistic eyes, looking constantly for opportunity to make Christ known to those who need him?

There is much to do, and much to distract us from doing it.

However, with God all things are possible. If we commit ourselves to long term visioning and strategizing as we have presented it, we'll be able to resist the distractions and with the help of the Holy Spirit, catch the vision as we take our future seriously.

Questions For Study and Discussion

1. What does it mean to you to take the future of the ACC seriously?
2. Do you think of yourself as an Anglican Christian, rather than a Christian Anglican? What exactly do you mean by that?
3. Do you feel a concern for our theological schools? What can you do to have a positive influence on them? How might you support and encourage theological students studying at schools in your area?
4. Has your parish considered welcoming students into your area for field placements, and once ordained, as assistant curates in your church? Is this a viable policy for you? If finances are a sticking-point for curacies, do you pray about that? Has your parish struck up a dialogue with the appropriate diocesan officials in order to secure the necessary funding?
5. Are you concerned about young people? What can you do to have a positive influence in youth ministry, both in your parish and in the national church?
6. Do you have a passion for effective pastoral episcopacy? What can you do to encourage godly committed clergy in our parishes to consider seeking the episcopal role?
7. Do you have a passion for responsible, Christ-honouring evangelism? What gifts and talents can you bring to evangelistic ministry? Do you share the vision of the ACC presenting the claims of Christ to all Canadians within the next generation? If so, what will you do about it?



O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery. By the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation. Let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Book of Alternative Services, p.634)