

The Prayer Book Society of Canada  
**Newsletter**

Easter 2008

## PBSC Annual General Meeting

*Saturday, May 31st, 2008, 2:00-4:00 PM*

**At St. Olave's Church, 360 Windermere Ave., Toronto**  
*(just south of Bloor between the Runnymede and Jane subway stops)*

The business of the meeting will be to receive the report of the National Chairman; to examine the annual financial report; and to elect an Honorary President and up to fifteen Councillors to serve as members of the National Council. Nominations are also invited for the positions of National Chairman, Vice-Chairmen, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Recording Secretary, which are elected by the National Council prior to the AGM. Nominees must be members of the Society, and nominations must be made by a mover and seconder who must also be members of the Society. All nominations must be received by the end of April, and should be sent to the national Recording Secretary, Mr. Ronald Bentley, at 737 Hot Springs Way, Gloucester, Ontario, K1V 1W8. E-mail: [rwbentley@sympatico.ca](mailto:rwbentley@sympatico.ca).

*Guest Speaker:*

The Revd. Dr. Murray Henderson

Murray Henderson serves in the Diocese of Toronto, and has been a priest of the Anglican Church of Canada for 36 years. He has just accepted a new appointment as Pastor of Christ Church/St. James' Humber Bay. Murray has been involved in Anglican Essentials since its beginnings, and is currently on the Federation Council, having served at General Synod 2007 as Chair of Essentials' Motions and Strategy Committee. He prays and trusts that God will reform and renew the Anglican Church in the years to come, and is working to that end. He loves the Book of Common Prayer, it being one of the means that God used to draw him to Anglicanism. Married to Diana, they have three grown children with grandchild number four on the way. Murray loves a good game of squash.

### "Noli me Tangere"

Painted about 1515 by the Italian master Titian, this work depicts the moment in the garden where Jesus was laid in the tomb, when Mary Magdalene recognizes the risen Christ in the man she had thought to be the gardener. "Do not cling to me", he tells her, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God".

(John 20:17)



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## Whither the ACC?

By *Diana Verseghy*

Over the past few weeks we have been witnessing some unsettling developments in our church, as the splits that we have seen developing south of the border have now begun to appear in this country. As of today's date (March 28), 15 parishes or congregations affiliated with the Anglican Network in Canada have voted to dissociate themselves from the Anglican Church of Canada and place themselves under the oversight of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone. Reprisals from diocesan authorities have been swift, with some priests facing suspension or revocation of their licences, and some congregations being locked out of their buildings. Lawsuits for ownership of the properties are pending or underway in many locations.

### Background

To summarize the background, the Anglican Network in Canada has maintained for a number of years that the Canadian Church is irrevocably walking away from the Anglican Communion. They regard the passing of the motion at General Synod last year that same-sex blessings are "not in conflict with core doctrine" as having finally demonstrated this. Archbishop Gregory Venables, Primate of the Southern Cone, has offered his oversight for those parishes and dioceses who wish to sever ties with the Canadian Church and has accepted two retired Canadian bishops, Donald Harvey and Malcolm Harding, to act locally as their bishops. Network parishes have been requested to put to a vote the

question as to whether they wish to take up this offer, or remain with the Canadian Church for the time being. The congregations that have made this move are mostly in the dioceses of New Westminster and Niagara, and most passed the motion, brought forward to their annual Vestry meetings last month, by overwhelming majorities. Some are very large: St. John's (Shaughnessy) in Vancouver is reportedly the largest Anglican parish in Canada. The Church of the Good Shepherd in Vancouver comprises the largest Chinese Anglican parish in the country.

I have personal friends in some of the Network parishes that have taken this step, and I have the greatest respect for their faithfulness and devotion. I also honour their courage in acting upon their convictions, in the face of possibly having to give up their church buildings and start afresh. I am appalled by the heavy-handedness with which their actions have been greeted on the part of the diocesan hierarchies in question.

### Not hopeless yet

At the same time, my own view remains that so far, despite General Synod having passed the "core doctrine" motion mentioned above, and despite its having pulled back from endorsing the "local option" by the narrowest of margins – two votes in the House of Bishops – the Anglican Church of Canada as a whole has still not irrevocably jumped off the cliff. The House of Bishops itself, with the exception of Bp. Michael Ingham in New Westminster, continues to hold the line, and although the diocesan synods of Ottawa, Montreal and Niagara voted last year to ask their

bishops to permit the "local option", none of the bishops in question has as yet given his consent. The recent letter sent by our Primate, Fred Hiltz, to the other Primates and Moderators of the Anglican Communion, although ambiguous at some points, stressed the Canadian Church's wish to remain in the global Communion. Thus, although I recognize that a good case can be made for parishes in New Westminster turning to the Southern Cone, given the fact that Bishop Michael Ingham has in defiance of the global Communion refused to withdraw his approval for same-sex blessings in his diocese, I cannot as yet see a justification for parishes not in New Westminster to opt out.

### International perspective

This position is in keeping with Archbishop Rowan Williams' recent remarks to Florida bishop John Howe – that our connection to the Anglican Communion is primarily through our bishop, and that any bishop who upholds the principles of the Windsor Report is in communion with him. As he remarked, national churches are, in a sense, simply a product of historical development; theologically it is the bishops who are the local heads of the Church. So even if our General Synod at its next meeting were to consent to the "local option", unless and until my own bishop acted in defiance of the Communion and was effectively excommunicated, I would not feel constrained to seek episcopal oversight elsewhere.

### The big picture

Having said that, it is worth noting that the Southern Cone initiative represents an absolutely new development in the history of

Anglicanism. There have been various splits in the past within Anglicanism, but this one is intrinsically different from any that have gone before in that the dissenters are not abandoning the Anglican Communion but are joining themselves to another province of it. Their stated intent is not to separate themselves from the Communion as a whole, but specifically from the Anglican Church of Canada. Thus they still have every right to call themselves Anglican – more so, it can well be

“that such actions are not a valid expression of Anglicanism”.

Archbishop Williams responded that although he could not sanction such actions, neither did he have the authority to stop them.

#### **Run-up to Lambeth**

Much will now depend on what comes out of the Lambeth Conference this summer. Archbishop Williams provided some overall thoughts on this in his Advent letter to the global Communion. He made it clear that Lambeth

there must be ways in which members of the Communion can appropriately distance themselves from decisions and policies to which they have not agreed. The Communion also needs to recognize the divided state of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. (and ultimately, perhaps, the Canadian Church), and consider how this should practically be taken into account. He stated bluntly that not all of those who call themselves “Anglican” can claim to speak for the Communion. In a later news release he announced the appointment of the “Windsor Continuation Group”, a committee which is tasked with addressing outstanding issues outlined in his Advent letter and bringing recommendations to the Lambeth Conference for debate: among other things, considering specifically whether it is possible for provinces or individual bishops at odds with the expressed mind of the Communion to participate fully in representative Communion agencies and ecumenical bodies. It will also ponder the exact status of bishops who have been consecrated by one province for ministry in another.

#### **GAFCon**

Given the momentous issues to be discussed at Lambeth, it is a matter of great regret that four of the most vibrant African provinces (Nigeria, Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya) have stated that their Primate and bishops will not be attending. It is regrettable because this is a time when their voices most need to be heard within the Communion as a whole. Instead they are planning a conference at the end of June in Jordan and Jerusalem, called the “Global Anglican Future Conference” (GAFCon), which will



*Canterbury, England, venue of the 2008 Lambeth Conference*

argued, than those who act unilaterally against the stated mind of the Communion. Archbishop Hiltz, in his letter to the global Primates, noted that he had appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury to address the “intervention” of the Southern Cone and to make it clear

resolution 1.10 (which reaffirms the traditional view of marriage and sexual activity) continues to express the common mind of the Anglican Communion; that the consensus in the Communion is not in favour of change in our discipline or our interpretation of the Bible; and that

focus on partnership and moving forward in mission. Despite scaremongering in some sectors of the media, those participating in the conference have vigorously denied that this is a rival to the Lambeth Conference, and have affirmed that they have no intention of seceding from the Anglican Communion. The primates involved have issued a joint statement clarifying their position – that they cannot in conscience pretend to be in fellowship with those bishops in the U.S. who have been responsible for “tearing the fabric of the Communion” as the Windsor Report put it, and who have not given any sign that they are prepared to reconsider their position; that it would be hypocritical of them to meet with them as if nothing had happened; and that they must formally protest the inviting of them to the Conference. One cannot but understand and respect their stance, while grieving over the absence of their voices at the Conference.

Archbishop Williams stressed in a recent address to the English General Synod that he respected the consciences of those who feel unable to attend and regretted their decision, and made it clear that there would be work to do after Lambeth in rebuilding relationships with them. Certainly he is not considering them as in any way cut off from the Communion by their non-attendance.

#### **Denial in Canada?**

Back in Canada, there seems to be a certain level of denial of the seriousness of the situation. Archbishop Hiltz’s letter to the Primates, while adopting a conciliatory tone overall, nevertheless contained one peculiar remark. On the subject of the votes in favour of the “local option” in Ottawa, Montreal and Niagara, it stated, “I believe these resolutions present an opportunity to test the mind of the local church”. Yet the fact is that we are no longer at liberty to “test” this matter as if nothing had

happened – it has been made clear that this is an issue that has worldwide implications for the global Communion. Likewise, the letter noted that “General Synod 2007 also concurred by resolution with the opinion of the St. Michael Report that the blessing of same-sex unions should not be a communion-breaking issue.” But the opinion of Synod and of the framers of the Report is neither here nor there. Regardless of what they may think “should” be, the unanswerable fact remains that it IS a communion-breaking issue. A number of Anglican provinces have declared themselves in broken or impaired communion with the Episcopal Church and some with the Canadian Church, and this is not going away until the issue is resolved. The place of our Church in the global Communion continues to be an open question, and we will have to await the outcome of the events of this summer.

## **Salsa dancing packs in the youth at St. Luke’s Church, Hamilton**



Who said Prayer Book parishes were stodgy? Held every month, the Spaghetti Dinner and Salsa Dances have been Saint Luke’s most successful outreach to people in the North End of Hamilton. The \$5 admission offers a low-cost night out, and attracts a faithful dance clientele from as far away as Saint Paul’s Dunnville. Free lessons and an all-you-can-eat dinner, plus dinner entertainment, and especially the lack of alcoholic beverages, give the young a great place to meet and have fun in a safe environment. These dinner dances are posted on the diocesan website and advertised in the local paper. Dinner starts at 6 PM and dancing at 7 PM, usually on the last Saturday of the month. Everyone is welcome.

# The Prayer of Humble Access: at the heart of the mystery of God's love for us

By Desmond Scotchmer

*"We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the Flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his Blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, And that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen".*

This vivid and arresting prayer, known as the Prayer of Humble Access, appears on page 83 of the 1962 revision of the Canadian Book of Common Prayer. It is one of the most beautiful and memorable prayers in the English language, and has spoken to generations of devout and prayerful Anglicans. Yet it has evinced some of the most vitriolic abuse and contempt from the modernizers who reshaped Anglican worship, and tried to re-make Anglican doctrine in the process, beginning in the 1960's.

I remember being profoundly dismayed, and puzzled, to come across this bitter antipathy in university, when, as an undergraduate, still burning with zeal from an intense conversion experience with the risen, ascended, glorified Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ, I began to explore Anglicanism more deeply. It was, in fact, prayers like the Prayer of Humble Access that had spoken to me most deeply from the pages of the Book of Common Prayer, and had led me to start exploring the implications of my own conversion to Christ in an Anglican context, rather than some other. I was at a loss to understand why something that was so deeply meaningful to me could attract such animosity from these people, who were, after all, much older than I was, yet kept on talking about the need for "relevance", and the need to connect with the younger generation.

In the years since, I have come to the conclusion that this hostility was no accident. It was not merely the prayer itself which they resented, it was the theology and world-view from which the Prayer of Humble Access sprang that they rejected: a world-view informed by piety, adoration, and prayerful meditation on the Scriptures, and a profound humility.

## The Prayer Itself

While its phrases recall the mediaeval collects and the Greek liturgy of St Basil, the Prayer of Humble Access itself is an original composition of Thomas Cranmer. The prayer echoes, of course, our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. It also alludes to two acts of Christ's mercy to the Gentiles: to the Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) and to the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21). Significantly, both these stories foreshadow God's adoption through grace of new sons and daughters into the stock of Abraham, and the new covenant with those who come to Him with deep humility, trusting not in their own righteousness, but only in His mercy. Many in Israel, in

their "pride of righteousness which is the Law" despise and reject the coming Messiah, but these Gentiles, in humility and faith, receive Him with simplicity and joy.

The Prayer of Humble Access is a prayer of searching, uncompromising spiritual purity and power. In its dual emphasis, it turns our attention inward towards our own unworthiness, and upward to the graciousness of the living God, manifested in the gifts we receive from His Table. Its themes are forgiveness, nourishment, union with God. The prayer confronts us and challenges us. It is a call to reject the shallow values of ego, of vanity, and the world. It rings the death knell to Phariseism and self-love, and encourages us to renounce trust in our own righteousness.

Significantly, the prayer is placed in the context of the prayer of consecration and the Communion, at the very moment when Time is suspended, and we partake of eternity, in the body and blood of the crucified, risen, ascended, and glorified Christ. The Prayer of Humble Access reminds us that it is God's righteousness that enables us to enter into this most holy moment of communion with the living God, not our own merits. Nor are we to forget that our redemption is bought at a price: it is our sins that have put the Lord of Life on the Cross.

Some suggest that this emphasis in the Prayer Book is some outmoded vestige of mediaeval piety. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Book of Common Prayer is its fidelity to Scripture. Any emphasis in the Prayer Book is there because of a corresponding emphasis in the Bible. The worldview of the BCP, and its

understanding of the fallen nature of Man and our need for God comes straight from, and is formed directly by, the Bible. The emphasis of the Prayer of Humble Access is profoundly Biblical. Any one who doubts this should start by reading Romans, 3:10-20 and 5:12, ff; Luke 18:18, Philippians 3:9. Many other passages could of course be cited. This is simply good, old fashioned, Biblical Christianity. It's the message of the Old Testament, and the New, of Psalmist, Prophet, and Evangelist. It's the message of St John the Baptist, and the message of St Paul. It's mirrored in the emphasis upon the continual repentance for our sins in the writings of the early Fathers of the Church.

Humility, repentance: these are the essentials without which we cannot begin our approach to God, without which we cannot begin to understand the mystery of God's love towards us, shown above all in Christ's sacrifice upon the Cross. This is the message at the very heart of the Bible.

It's a message that the contemporary world needs to hear. Our culture encourages us to think of ourselves as the centre of all that matters, to think of our advancement, our self-interest, and self-gratification as the supreme good. The seductive world of advertising whispers to us, holding out alluring images of what we most deeply desire, as if in the possession of them we will somehow find happiness. Not only can you have what you want, it says, but you can have it now, and you are wrong to deny yourself anything. Even those among us who are religious are lulled into a complacent attitude towards God and his gifts towards us. No wonder the Prayer of Humble Access seems to strike a note so dissonant to the contemporary ear.

The fact that the Book of Common Prayer places the Prayer of Humble Access after the congregation has said the General Confession and received absolution is regarded by the modernizers as further proof of the excessive, and obsessively penitential nature of the BCP. But such criticism misunderstands the very nature of the Biblical understanding of man's fallen state, and the nature of confession and absolution.

Although we have confessed our sins, and God has been gracious to us and put them away, this does not somehow "immunize" us against sin: we are still frail creatures, in constant need of God's grace. However justified, however sanctified through Christ we may be, we are still unworthy in relation to the absolute and infinite Good who is God. We are at once worthy and unworthy. We receive God's gift of the Holy Communion (that is, we are worthy), recognizing that we fall short of the glory of God, and the goodness that He desires of us (we are unworthy). Indeed, herein lies the mystery, and the glory, of our salvation. A vast space remains between where we stand, on the one hand, fallen creatures in a fallen world, and the glory of God on the other, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." That gap is bridged only by Christ's blood.

It is indeed towards the heart of this mystery that the Prayer of Humble Access addresses our prayerful attention. The same prayer that reminds us of our lowliness ends with the petition "that our sinful bodies be made clean by his Body, and our souls washed through his most precious Blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us." The inextricable mystery of our salvation is held up for our

meditation, and our adoration. There are few passages in all of Christian liturgy that are more sublime, or more gracious.

By recognizing the unworthiness of the communicant as a reality, our understanding of the transforming power of divine grace communicated to us by God is heightened. Without that sense of unworthiness, there would be little to wonder at in the gift of divine grace. St John Damascene reminds us in one of his great prayers, which is read by Orthodox Christians before sleep: "For to save a righteous man is no great thing and to have mercy on the pure is nothing wonderful, for they are worthy of thy mercy. But on me, a sinner, show the wonder of thy mercy." Grace is amazing precisely because "it saves a wretch like me."

Another of the great prayers from the Book of Common Prayer which has been bitterly criticized by the modernizers is the Thanksgiving after Communion. It is the lovely prayer that begins on page 85 of the BCP: "Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee that thou dost graciously feed us in these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, assuring us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us..." and continues "And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee..."

The prayer gathers up all the varied meanings of the Communion: thanksgiving, grace, incorporation, fellowship with Christ, anticipation of the Kingdom of God. The prayer emphasizes that we can only offer an acceptable sacrifice to God (one of praise and thanksgiving) after we

have received the grace of the Holy Communion.

What offends the modernist critics, however, is the suggestion that we remain unworthy after taking the Communion: "Although we are unworthy, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences...". But the Prayer Book, again, puts these words here because our human frailty is part of our ongoing mortal condition, and will continue as long as we live in this world. Communion, like confession and absolution, does not "immunize" us against sin. We turn to God in awe and gratitude for his unimaginable gifts. It is only through consciousness of our own unworthiness that we begin to comprehend the magnitude of those gifts.

The Prayer Book, in these two great prayers (and they are indeed companion pieces, mirroring one another from either side of the Communion), reminds us of Our Lord's admonition: "When you have done all that is commanded of you, say, we are unworthy servants." (Luke 17:10).

This profoundly Scriptural attitude encapsulated in the Prayer Book seems to offend those who believe that Christianity today can only be "relevant" if it conforms to the modern world view, still heavily under the influence of Freud and modern psychology. The Scriptural attitudes are viewed as "damaging to the psyche" and "morbid". This indeed is the sticking point. There is a profound gap between the way the Bible sees human nature, and the way that the contemporary

world does. The temptation for Anglican Christianity over the past thirty years and more has been to choose the modern view because it sits more comfortably with our egos.

But the Bible is not a comfortable book, and Christianity is not a comfortable religion. Christ's words are always challenging, unsettling. The way of the Cross is difficult and demanding. The Prayer of Humble Access sets before us the uncompromising, yet realistic, viewpoint of Holy Scripture, and invites us to walk the road of humility which the saints have walked before us.

## Branch restructuring underway in Southern Ontario

Representatives of the London, Grand Valley, Niagara and Toronto branches met on January 19th at St. Luke's Church in Brantford to discuss the restructuring of the branch areas. Sparking this meeting were two sets of recent events in the London and Niagara branches. The London branch president, Revd. Gordon Maitland, recently moved with his family away from London to take up the rectorship of a parish in Windsor. The Niagara branch president, Walter Raybould, resigned at the end of 2007 owing to work pressures and to the fact that several key members of his branch executive had moved out of the Diocese.

The branch representatives discussed how best to meet these challenges, and to work together to consolidate and re-establish PBSC activities in the area. In the case of London, it was decided to amalgamate the membership into the neighbouring Grand Valley branch for the time being, pending the reorganization of the executive committee and the election of new officers. In the meantime, Fr. Maitland is spearheading a re-launching of the Windsor branch, which had become inactive some years ago.

In the case of the Niagara branch, a prospective new branch president has come forward in the person of Alexander Urquhart, a parishioner at St. Paul's, Dunnville. Alex is a regular attender at the St. Michael's Youth Conference, and is a staunch supporter of the Prayer Book. Although only 16 years old, he is keen to launch a new branch executive, with the help of family and friends. It is anticipated that this new executive will draw largely on PBSC members in Dunnville and St. Catharines. The past president of the branch, Walter Raybould, has pledged his assistance in this effort, and has already met several times with Alex to discuss ways and means. A reorganizational meeting is planned for soon after Easter.



*PBSC representatives meet in Brantford.  
Left to right: Diana Verseghy (Toronto), Desmond Scotchmer (Toronto), Alexander Urquhart (Niagara),  
Revd. Gordon Maitland (Windsor), Brian Munro (Grand Valley).*

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Opinions expressed in this  
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