

The Provincial Synod of the Ecclesiastical Province of Canada

Presidential Address

given by

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison

Quebec City, September 18, 2003

On this day in 1893 members of the first General Synod gathered in St. James Cathedral, Toronto for a service of Thanksgiving. No longer were we three Provinces, each owing our allegiance to the Church of England. We were, and have been since that date, an independent national church. It is therefore a happy coincidence that with us is the Primate, The Most Rev'd Michael Peers and the General Secretary of General Synod, The Venerable Jim Boyles

In the words of the Gospel,

*For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'
I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour.
Others have laboured, and you have entered into their
labours. (John 4: 37-8)*

It is a time to look back to what was sown in other generations to bring us the harvest we now reap. Much of it is good and inspires us to thanksgiving. Some of it, in the clear light of hindsight is not. We reap the harvest of the good with the bad. And with such nourishment as the harvest provides, we labour to prepare the ground and do planting of our own for generations after us to harvest.

Since we last met in Halifax in September 2000 we have said farewell to the Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, our 19th Metropolitan, Arthur Peters. The Bishop of Central Newfoundland, Eddie Marsh retired, and very soon the Bishop of Fredericton, William Hockin will join them in retirement, as will the Bishop of Western Newfoundland, Leonard Whitten, and in February, our Primate Michael Peers. Each knows what it is to inherit a harvest for which they can neither claim credit, nor accept blame. Yet each knows what it is to accept responsibility for the harvest, and to make of it nourishment for the flock of Christ.

Through the Primate's reflections during our session, and through the General Secretary's presentation on plans for the General Synod of 2004, we will have some insights into that process. Then through the focus groups organized by Canon Eric Beresford and his team, we will have an opportunity to involve ourselves in preparing to plant for a future harvest.

We have equipped each of you with a copy of "Stained Glass, Sweet Grass, Hosannas & Songs" – the result of an intentional listening process at every level of the Church across the land. We hope you have found it a helpful preparation for your participation in the life of this Synod.

There have been significant changes in the world since we last met. The attack on the World Trade Centre, and on the Pentagon, two years ago has opened North American consciousness to a new

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perception of the world, and our place in it. Those events set in motion a war on terrorism, and a tightening of security at the borders of our own, and of most countries. The Canadian response to the thousands of stranded travellers prevented from landing at U.S. airports was everything we might have hoped. Nowhere was the need greater, nor the response more generous than in Newfoundland. New relationships have been established across our borders, which may last a lifetime. In the late fall of 2001 it was my privilege to go to New York with Cardinal Turcotte and a rabbi. There we conducted an inter-faith service at ground zero, to remember Canadians who died there, to pray for all the victims and their families, and for police, firefighters and volunteers responding to the emergency.

One significant consequence of September 11, 2001 is that 2,000 of our young men and women in uniform are now in Afghanistan, with another 2,000 standing by. Another is that the plight of immigrants and refugees globally is made much more difficult.

We have since witnessed the invasion of Iraq, against the counsel of the United Nations, and over the protest of millions of citizens of countries great and small. Religious leaders of Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities were all but unanimous in their opposition. What does it all say of the prospects for international collaboration for justice and peace? On the one hand we are encouraged that people all over the world as never before came together in unprecedented numbers to say “no” to war. And we are encouraged that religious voices, which have too often been the cause of division, spoke together in common purpose. On the other hand, we are appalled that the advice of the community of nations was so easily set aside by the United States and Great Britain. And we are distressed that even on the evidence after the fact, the reasons proffered for the invasion cannot be validated. The long-term impact of that invasion has yet to be realized. Its short-term effect on the international economy, and on international relations, however, is felt not only throughout the Middle East, but also within our own borders, and in our relationships with our closest neighbour.

Three years have also wrought significant change within the Church. When last we met it was feared that several of our dioceses, and the General Synod of our Church could sink into financial insolvency. In fact one diocese (Cariboo) has. The outcome of negotiations with the federal government, however, allows us to look to the future with more confidence.

Human sexuality continues to loom large with a range of issues both in the society and in the Church. Provincial jurisdictions have recognized civil unions, and in the case of Ontario, marriage between same-sex partners. Now the whole question goes before the federal parliament. In England a Suffragan Bishop, who happened to be homosexual, was appointed in the Diocese of Oxford. Under pressure he petitioned the Queen to withdraw the appointment. In the United States, a Bishop who is homosexual was elected for the Diocese of New Hampshire. Both houses of the General Convention later concurred in the election. Here in Canada the blessing of same-sex relationships was authorized in the Diocese of New Westminster. Next month our Primate will meet with his colleagues at Lambeth to consider the impact of these and other developments for the Anglican

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Communion. Our House of Bishops has agreed among themselves that they would take no further action on the established tradition before the General Synod has the opportunity to deliberate next summer. Those who favour change tend to see the issue in terms of justice, equal opportunity and fair treatment. Those who oppose change argue that the change is at variance with Christian orthodoxy and faithfulness to received tradition.

We are called to communion, with God and with one another. Our very coming together to meet in Synod is a response to that call. We do well to consider that behind every opportunity to listen to one another and encourage one another is God's call for us to realize our baptismal unity in Christ. Is that not why the members of General Synod gathered in thanksgiving in St. James Cathedral, Toronto, 110 years ago? Was it not the reason behind the joyful celebration of our full communion with the Lutheran Church at our last General Synod? Is it not why we begin in Eucharist as we meet in this Synod? On August 31st in Fredericton we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Christ Church Cathedral, the project of its first Bishop, John Medley. Commenting on an intense division within the Anglican Communion at the time, the Bishop said,

*Whether a man be a low churchman, a high churchman, or
a ritualist, there is comprehensiveness in this church to
embrace him, and one hopes, charity enough
to make use of his zeal and piety*

I wonder what his comment might be on the divisions between Anglicans in our day over questions of sexual orientation, and the responses of zealous and pious Christians to those questions.

We are in the Diocese of Quebec for this session, in part to celebrate with them an important anniversary. It is 200 years since the establishment of the Cathedral in Quebec, and on Sunday we are all invited to join in the celebrations. May I take this opportunity to express to Bishop Stavert, and to his Local Arrangements Committee under the leadership of Peter Simons, our sincere thanks for the invitation, and for the warmth and generosity of their welcome. I would be remiss if I did not also express my own thanks to the members of the Provincial Executive Committee for making my first year as Metropolitan both manageable and enjoyable. We have met frequently by teleconference, and I am particularly grateful to our Prolocutor, Peter Irish, for his leadership in addressing the business of the Synod and its Council. It has been a busy time in the Province of Canada since our last Synod. Three years have brought significant changes in leadership. We have a new Diocesan Bishop for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island – Bishop Fred Hiltz. Bishop Don Young became Bishop of Central Newfoundland. Bishop Claude Miller became Coadjutor, and will soon be Diocesan Bishop in Fredericton. And Western Newfoundland has elected Percy Coffin to be Coadjutor Bishop. And, of course, we have a new Metropolitan. During the past year I have had inquiries from as far away as New Zealand and the Indian Ocean about the electronic electoral process used for that election.

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The process of planting and harvesting goes forward, symbolized by these changes in leadership, as we continue to build in this land a Church worthy of Jesus Christ. Our gathering is part of that process in a complex and troubled world. Through our meetings, led by the Spirit, may we listen to one another, learn from one another and encourage one another in the love of Christ. So, may we give faithful witness to God's kingdom of justice and peace for the blessing of generations to come.

Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours.