



Diocese of New Westminster
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Michael Ingham
To be read or distributed in all Parishes in the Diocese of New Westminster
On Sunday November 21st, 2010

Dear Friends in Christ:

Last Monday the British Columbia Court of Appeal dismissed the legal action brought against the Diocese by individuals in four of our parishes.

My hope and prayer is that this will bring to an end a sad and unnecessary dispute.

When our Diocesan Synod voted for the third time in 2002 to bless committed, faithful same-sex relationships we made it clear that such permission was optional and not mandatory. No one has ever been required to act against their conscience in this matter. Our Diocese welcomes people of differing convictions. My desire has always been that we should respect one another and continue to serve the mission of God together.

The matter brought before the Court was not about sexuality nor the truth of the Gospel. Rather, litigants sought to take possession of diocesan buildings and assets after they had removed themselves from the Anglican Church of Canada. The Court of Appeal refused this request, as did the B.C. Supreme Court in 2009.

In doing so, both Courts have upheld the structures and governance of historic Anglicanism. Both have affirmed the synodical and episcopal character of Anglican tradition. Both have recognized that decisions in the Canadian Church have been reached in accordance with our own procedures and customs, and that the civil courts should not be used to determine church doctrine.

Churches are sacred places. They hold precious memories. The lives of our parents and children are celebrated and remembered here. They are spaces where our deep human longing is met by the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one should have to choose between their faith and their church.

Today I am issuing a sincere appeal to members of those congregations whose leaders have drawn them into this action to remain in communion with Canadian Anglicans, and to stay in the churches where they worship. I will work with them in seeking new clergy to fill the positions of those who have left the Anglican Church of Canada. This will be a mutual and collaborative process, as all such appointments in the Diocese are.

Let us all remember the first Christian principles – love of God and love of our neighbour. Our divided world needs a united church. I invite you all to join with me in the work of healing and reconciliation, mutual forgiveness and forbearance, so that we may move forward together in humility with God's grace.

Bishop Michael Ingham