



## The Grassroots Speak: The Essentials Story Unfolds

In June 2005, within the elegant confines of Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall, the Anglican Essentials Movement very publicly came of age. As a consequence, the story of the not-so-quiet struggle going on in the life of the Anglican Church in this country may have reached a significant turning point.

For at least 50 years, two very different religions have been contending for the mind and heart of the Anglican Church of Canada. During that time, more and more Anglicans have grown increasingly aware – and concerned – that a subtle yet powerful campaign to promote the absorption of a new religion, a religion of accommodation to the *spirit of the age*, was being introduced into their church. They recognized that powerful forces within their church were (and still are) determined to fundamentally reshape the root principles, and the very identity of Anglicanism, from a denomination based upon common biblical and theological principles, to one based upon institutions and processes.

### The Montreal Declaration

In response to this state of affairs, a growing grassroots movement of those willing to *contend* for the faith has welled up across the country. From the ranks of ordinary Canadian Anglicans, many have heeded a call to dedicate themselves to the defense and recovery of Anglican *orthodoxy*, the great heritage of apostolic Christian faith in which our tradition is rooted. It is a response that is not likely to go away.

Approximately 25 years ago, the realization of what was happening to Canadian Anglicanism inspired activity. Organizations like the *Prayer Book Society of Canada*, *Barnabas Anglican Ministries* and *Anglican Renewal Ministries* were launched to defend, study, uphold and recover orthodoxy and to encourage general renewal within the life and practice of traditional Anglicanism. The work of these three organizations encouraged an increasing awareness of the need for a clear restatement of the identifying principles of Anglican Christianity, principles which seemed to be slipping away under the onslaught of New Age spiritualism and the complacency of affluence.

This awareness took shape and purpose at the June 1994 Essentials Conference in Montreal – an event jointly sponsored by *Barnabas*, *Anglican Renewal Ministries* and the *Prayer Book Society of Canada*. That historic gathering culminated in the signing of *The Montreal Declaration of Anglican Essentials*. It also inspired the subsequent formation of the Essentials coalition.

This coalition was a true partnership, a joint working committee, of the three sponsoring organizations of the Montreal event. Like a three-legged stool, the Essentials Council needed the committed support of all three partners to stand strong. The Essentials '94 Covenant, which inspired its formation, read:

*It is with great joy that we covenant together before God, to present "The Montreal Declaration of Anglican Essentials" to our respective organizations. We will present the Declaration to our organizations with the intention of working together to develop a vision and plan to implement God's purposes for the Anglican Church of Canada."*

In the subsequent eleven years, despite differences of churchmanship, theological emphases, and styles of liturgical and pastoral practice that characterize the Anglican family, the coalition held firm. It survived and was strengthened under the tests of diverse perspectives, personal relationships and financial strain. At times, only sheer resolve to work together in godly harmony held it together. And, one by one, the Essentials Council took on the extraordinary tasks that God seemed to continuously set before it.

In so doing, the coalition established a solid record of leadership and accomplishment while maintaining a strong working relationship among the three founding organizations. Conferences were sponsored and clergy retreats organized. Gradually a national profile was established. Meanwhile, the Montreal Declaration has taken its place among the important documents of today's global Anglican Communion.

## **The Anglican Essentials movement**

The work of the coalition culminated in 2004 when Essentials sponsored three major events in quick succession: a national satellite conference, *For Such a Time as This*, in February; a high-profile presence at General Synod 2004 in St. Catherine's, Ontario in June; and the Ottawa Conference entitled *The Way Forward* that brought together over 700 Anglicans from across the country at the end of August. In Ottawa, the first steps were taken to bring about the metamorphosis of the Essentials coalition into a full fledged national movement that could respond to the crisis in the global Anglican Communion sparked by the actions of the bishop and diocese of New Westminster and exacerbated by the actions of General Synod 2004.

Both in the lead-up to General Synod 2004 and in its immediate aftermath, it was clear that Essentials had a number of responsibilities. There was an urgent need for strong leadership to direct and coordinate a strategy for the traditionalist Anglican community to respond to the innovations now being rushed into the church. The voice of orthodoxy needed both national and international advocacy. It needed to be gathered and focused; it needed to be connected to its sister movements in the rest of the Anglican Communion. Essentials was uniquely situated to help provide for these needs.

The difficulty was in discerning how to achieve this.

Orthodox Anglicans, struggling in their various situations across the country, were expressing many feelings. In many dioceses, they were feeling betrayed and abandoned by their own church leadership. They felt isolated from the decision-making processes within their parishes and dioceses.

In the diocese of New Westminster, some felt that any sense of communion with their bishop and synod had become impossible. In fact, 22 Primates, representing 2/3rds of the 77-million member global Anglican Communion had declared broken or impaired communion with that bishop and diocese. Eight parishes had walked out of the Synod in 2002 which voted to bless same sex unions contrary to the clear teaching and doctrine of the Anglican Communion (as expressed by the 1998 Lambeth resolution 1.10) and in spite of the call of the 4 Instruments of Unity<sup>1</sup>, and the 1997 Canadian House of Bishops guidelines. These eight parishes formed the Anglican Communion in New Westminster (ACiNW) and appealed to the Canadian House of Bishops and the international Communion for Alternative Episcopal Oversight. Other congregations and parishes subsequently joined the ACiNW and some of them eventually left the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) because of the failure of the ACC to provide a scheme of Adequate Episcopal Oversight for them.

In other parts of the country, Anglicans felt fortunate they could still approach and work with their bishop and synod to resist the innovations now being pushed by the national church. They felt there was much within their parish and diocese, and even in General Synod, worth defending and preserving. It is, after all, God's church.

Elsewhere, there was no discussion about the crisis at all. Many were completely ignorant of the international implications of the actions and direction of the Anglican Church of Canada.

After prayer, debate and soul searching, the Essentials leadership concluded that one solution simply would not fit all. While there was indeed one community of Canadian Anglicans unified in the "faith once delivered to the saints" which would not abandon its Anglican heritage or its hope for the recovery of faithful biblical orthodoxy, the leadership identified two primary responses to the crisis in Canada.

## **The two arms of Anglican Essentials: The Federation and the Network**

After General Synod 2004 and the passing of the amendment to Motion A134<sup>2</sup>, Essentials felt it had a clear responsibility to provide an organizational home and a way forward for Canadian Anglicans who wished to remain faithful to the biblical teaching and doctrine of the global Anglican Communion. They wanted to provide hope and allow faithful Canadian Anglicans an opportunity to contribute to the defense and recovery of Anglican orthodoxy in Canada, while honouring the different responses to the crisis. Both the identified groups were determined **not** to leave the Anglican Church of Canada. On the other hand, what if *the Anglican Church of Canada* was leaving them, and "walking apart" from the global Anglican Communion?

At the Ottawa conference in August 2004, the terms “Federation” and “Network” were first introduced. Delegates elected members to two steering committees charged with the task of developing these concepts into real structures within the next 12 months. As the Conference itself unfolded, it was clear the concepts were embryonic and much confusion existed around the vision and purposes for the two groups. Rumours abounded that the Network was for those “leaving” the church, while Federation was for those “staying”. This misconception still persists among many Canadian Anglicans today and is something all faithful Anglicans need to help dispel.

Each steering committee elected in Ottawa had representation from the east coast to the west coast. By June 2005, the Steering Committees reached a common vision for the new *Anglican Essentials Canada (AEC)*, which was spelled out in the *Anglican Essentials Canada Principles* document dated June 9, 2005 (posted at: [www.anglicanessentials.ca](http://www.anglicanessentials.ca)). *AEC* is responding directly to the February call of the global Primates of the Communion: Canadian Anglicans need to choose whether they will “walk apart” ... or commit to remaining a full member and an integral part of the inter-dependent global Anglican Communion. The *AEC* response is two-pronged. As a result of the June 9, 2005 agreement, the delegates at Roy Thomson Hall were presented with a clear organizational solution to ensure the unity of the Essentials movement, while providing a choice for Canadian Anglicans.

*The Essentials Federation* will make every effort to persuade the ACC to repent and choose to return to full membership in the global Communion. *The Essentials Network* will prepare for the possibility the ACC fails to respond to the efforts of the Federation. In the meantime, the Network is also there to support orthodox Anglicans in Canada who are without Adequate Episcopal Oversight and to build bridges with the global Anglican Communion in case the ACC does “walk apart” as the *Windsor Report* warns.

The *Federation* and the *Network* are each separate, self-governing bodies with equal representation on the Board of *Anglican Essentials Canada*. There, the two constituencies come together to speak with one voice to the rest of the church, to develop common initiatives, mission and ministry, and to assist one another’s efforts on the different but *complementary* responses to the current crisis.

The Federation will focus its efforts on the recovery and renewal of traditional Anglican Christian orthodoxy as the norm of faith and practice for the ACC, to bring it in line with the vast majority of the global Communion, which firmly upholds that same orthodoxy. It will pray and labour for the repentance of the ACC and will be a voice for its members, particularly to the national church up to and at General Synod 2007. The Federation’s mandate is to use its best efforts to prevent the turning away of Canadian Anglicans from their church, or a *walking apart* from the global Communion by the ACC.

An important part of the Federation’s mandate will be to coordinate the work of presenting a strong voice and presence at General Synod 2007. Critical to this preparation will be establishing clear expectations of what constitutes true restoration of full communion status between the Anglican Church of Canada and the global Communion. The Federation will gather resources, mobilize diocesan planning and study groups, assign task groups and develop precise materials for the help and guidance of General Synod delegates.

Thus, a significant part of its work, which will be developed and shared jointly with the Network, will be to develop a program of education designed to provide Canadian Anglicans with a working knowledge of the foundations of their faith and of the Anglican Christian tradition. It will participate in the development of print and electronic materials such as conference DVD’s, lectures, reports and teaching packages. All of these will be designed to foster members’ awareness and understanding of developments in their diocese, the National church and global Anglicanism and the implications in the context of scripture.

The Federation will also work jointly with the Network to encourage the establishment of local Essentials Chapters to provide identity, mutual support and training to Anglicans determined to remain within the Communion. The Chapters will welcome and serve members of both the Federation and the Network.

The Network will represent, support and serve Canadian Anglicans who subscribe to its declaration of membership –affirming the doctrinal foundations of Anglicanism, including the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10 on issues of human sexuality – and repudiating any moves on the part of the ACC to *walk apart* from the global Anglican Communion, contrary to the Solemn Declaration of 1893.

The Network is building an ecclesiastical structure in case the ACC does *walk apart* and they have applied to the Panel of Reference for a scheme of Adequate Episcopal Oversight for Canadian Anglicans who find themselves in a state of “serious theological dispute” with their diocesan bishop or the Anglican Church of Canada.

In October 2005, the Archbishop of Canterbury publicly recognized members of the Network as full members of the Anglican Communion, and he personally welcomed that. In addition, the Primates of the Global South, representing 2/3rds of global Anglicans, offered their recognition, support and resources to the Network. The Network is determined to work with global Communion processes and in submission to the Primates to the best of its ability.

The Network is *not*, at this point, an ecclesiastical body and does not intend to launch such a body unless required to do so by the Primates in order to re-establish full communion status with the “Church of England throughout the world”, as set out in the Solemn Declaration of 1893. Most importantly, it must be emphasized that the Network *has not left the Anglican Church of Canada* and *does not desire to leave the ACC*, but at the same time, it insists that the true Anglican Church of Canada *must* be in full communion with the global Anglican Communion.

*Anglican Essentials Canada* has developed this organizational response to the current crisis within our church. It is a response that has been developed by Anglicans from across the country who love their church and faithfully desire the recovery of its orthodox heritage and foundational principles. All who share this love and who desire this recovery are invited and encouraged to consider supporting this movement by joining either the Federation or the Network and supporting the work of both.

## **Finding God’s place for you in Essentials**

The question for each Canadian Anglican is:

***What is my role in the preservation of Anglican orthodoxy in Canada over the next few years?***

The answer will depend very much on what you believe your primary mission is *at this point in time*.

### ***Option 1 – The Essentials Federation***

If you believe your primary mission at this time is to pray for and labour for repentance and renewal in the ACC, then you should join the Federation and labour with them to prepare for General Synod 2007. If you desire (and hope to persuade) the General Synod of the ACC to commit to full membership in the Anglican Communion as spelled out in the Solemn Declaration of 1893, that we “are and desire to remain, in full Communion with the Church of England throughout the world”<sup>3</sup> (now called the Anglican Communion), then the Federation is for you.

### ***Option 2 – The Essentials Network (ANiC)***

If you believe that your mission at this time is to prepare for the possible scenario of the ACC formally separating from the Anglican Communion, either by voluntarily voting to “walk apart” or by formal exclusion by Lambeth 2008, then you should join the Network.

Certainly the answer to the question will be short. Considering *which* answer to give may be heart-wrenching. Each of us must answer for ourselves after prayerful and careful consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> The four Instruments of Unity in the Anglican Communion are: The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Lambeth Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Motion A134 was amended to “affirm the integrity and sanctity of adult same sex relationships”.

<sup>3</sup> BCP p. viii