



National Gathering on Theological Education January 5-7, 2010 Montreal

Background

A major national conference on Theological Education for mission and ministry in the Anglican Church of Canada will be held at the Manoir D'Youville in the suburbs of Montreal, January 5-7, 2010. This meeting was mandated by both the House of Bishops and the Council of General Synod which charged the Faith Worship and Ministry committee with preparations for full review of Anglican Church of Canada processes and content of theological education for ordained ministries.

Much has happened since the last consultation in 1998, when the church in Canada was beginning to come to terms with the baptismal foundation and impetus for all ministries, and the multiplex nature of particular exercises of ordained ministry. These insights still need to be explored, within the now deeper-growing awareness of the missional nature of the church.

Our awareness of the complexities of theological education across the diverse contexts of our church has grown. We now face particular challenges as institutional and financial resources have become strained at a time when the challenge of ministry, including ordered ministry and its preparation has increased. Developments have also been happening at the international level, with the Archbishop of Canterbury's formation of the think-tank, *Theological Education in the Anglican Communion*. Many Provinces of the Anglican Communion are involved in reshaping their programmes for theological education. Most importantly here at home in Canada, Full Communion with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada also brings promises and the imperative to work together in mission.

Focus

It is time to call together once again the stakeholders in theological education to review our ways of preparation for church leaders for the next decade and further into the future.

Recognizing that all the baptized are called into ministry and mission, and that the foundational theological education 'textbook' for this might be said to be our baptismal covenant, this particular gathering will focus on preparation of those in process for presbyteral, or priestly, ministry. This is in no way to dismiss concerns about the needs for quality theological education for all the baptized, nor the urgency for the development of standards for training for the diaconate and episcopate, but reflects both the present ability and scope of national structures to deal with this one set of presenting questions at this particular time, as one aspect within the spectrum of important issues in the church's mission and ministry.

Members of the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee of General Synod have worked to assemble the groundwork for this National Gathering over several triennia of its work. More recently, an ad hoc planning committee, made up of representatives from the House of Bishops, theological schools, and experts in diocesan candidacy processes has been preparing an agenda and background material for the January 2010 gathering. Some of the areas we will look at are recruitment and discernment at the beginning of formation, assessment before ordination, and content and method in theological education itself.

When the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee, and subsequently the Planning Committee for this conference, received the task mandate and its language describing “national standards,” they recognized that underlying this language are a variety of complexities. These relate to the relationships between local cultural and contextual particularities in ministry and the common beyond-the-local apostolic understanding that Anglicans rightly uphold regarding the presbyterate. We live the challenges of missional engagement in the Canadian context that at once demands local immersion as well as a recognizable ‘priesthood’ across the country, diversity of expressions of ministry within the one ministry which belongs to Christ.

Participants

Those receiving invitations to this national gathering include a broad representation from all areas of church life most immediately involved in these concerns and best able both to prepare constituency conversations beforehand and afterwards. We hope for a gathering that will include theological college administrators and teachers, diocesan candidacy directors, pastors, students, lay parishioners, bishops, ACPO and other assessors, leaders in stewardship and resource management, ecumenical and full communion partners.

The national House of Bishops has rescheduled its first meeting of 2010 to follow immediately after the national gathering at the same location, thereby enabling the participation of most, if not all, bishops.

Matters of theological education for ministry touch the whole church, and in some respects everyone in the church can be considered a ‘stakeholder’. It is the expectation of the Planning Committee that each participant will in important ways be a ‘resource’ for the conference. We do ask for three solid days of work.

Background preparation and materials

The Planning Committee is in the process of assembling preparatory documentation for this gathering. These will include:

- A review of the present programmes of study available for theological education for the presbyterate
- A review of current standards, processes and expectations (National, Provincial, and Diocesan) for candidacy discernment, assessment and theological education.
- A consideration of several concrete possibilities for development into the future

These materials will be circulated in good advance to all those who register for the event. They are intended to be treated as resources for preparation and discussion, to encourage conversations amongst the various constituencies led, we suggest, by those who will be participants in the January conference.

Additional resources are also easily available online or from the Faith Worship and Ministry office. These include links to current international conversations about theological education through “TEAC”, resources from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Churches’ Council on Theological Education as well as from other Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Closer to home, Reports from past Anglican Church of Canada National and Provincial work on these and related matters are also available. See “Background information” below.

Process for Outcomes

This Conference will be a working meeting, the records and any recommendations of which will be compiled by the Planning Committee and its Staff, who will meet following the Conference. A Report and Recommendations will then be sent to the Faith Worship and Ministry committee in time for its meeting in February of 2010, thus allowing for any items requiring attention by the Council of General Synod or the General Synod of 2010 to be processed appropriately.

Registration Forms available on this website and MUST be completed by November 20 at the very latest

Cost of accommodations is covered by the planning committee for those within the category of invited participants.

Some financial support is available to assist with travel expense. Please indicate need as soon as possible by email to escully@national.anglican.ca

For further information, see as follows

- Location details: <http://www.sgm.qc.ca/manoir/>
- Background information on Theological Education issues both in Canada and with links to international and ecumenical work: <http://www.anglican.ca/faith/education/index.htm>
- Registration information and to indicate interest or intention to register: Ms Jo Abrams at the General Synod office in Toronto: 416-924-9199 ex. 273 or jabrams@national.anglican.ca
- Conference and other background details: Eileen Scully at the General Synod office: 416-924-9199 ex 286 or escully@national.anglican.ca