

# *Shared Episcopal Ministry*

## **ADDENDUM TO** **THE PRIMATE'S TASK FORCE REPORT ON AEO**

### **Introduction**

The original report of the Task Force offered background information leading to the development of several models of AEO all of which presumed the existence of a high level of generosity of spirit, which would permit some temporary ceding of jurisdiction in a number of areas of episcopal authority. The models, recognizing the gravity of the situation, were premised on the need for a solution which would require neither lengthy time to implement nor extensive debate leading to canonical change and yet would retain a degree of legitimacy by working from within the current hierarchical structures. The models also responded to the clearly expressed views of the many people interviewed by the Task Force. The discussion of the Task Force Report at the April meeting of the house of bishops in Regina made it very clear that while the seriousness of the situation and the urgency to act was understood, there was no consensus amongst the bishops as to how this might be achieved. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the report was a good starting point for further discussion. This addendum to the report recommends a model (based largely on the 3<sup>rd</sup> model of the original report) to replace those proposed. It is our hope that it will find a greater level of support from both the bishops and the Church at large.

*Nov 3 2004*

## ***SHARED EPISCOPAL MINISTRY***

This model recognizes the reality that one Canadian diocesan synod has and that in the future others may also deal with the question of whether to allow the blessing of same sex relationships to take place within the parishes of their dioceses. In the event of a diocesan synod and bishop agreeing to such blessings we believe that it is important that a binding conscience clause for parishes and clergy be available. Regardless of the outcome of those Synods some parishes may feel disenfranchised and vulnerable, and therefore desire to seek Shared Episcopal Ministry, where the diocesan bishop would share his/her episcopal oversight with another bishop. When a diocese is considering the question of blessings, we believe that the same synod should consider a motion that would allow Shared Episcopal Ministry in their diocese. Such a resolution should include the provisions outlined at para 3) and 4) below.

### **The Process of *Shared Episcopal Ministry***

- 1) The Metropolitan of each Province would be responsible for assembling a list of current and retired bishops in good standing in the Canadian Church and who would be willing to participate in providing Shared Episcopal Ministry within the province. The provincial house of bishops must approve the list. The Metropolitan will not be included on the list for his/her Province. It would be important to have a number of bishops from different theological perspectives so that all parishes requesting Shared Episcopal Ministry might be served. A bishop from another province of the Communion would be eligible to be on the Metropolitan's list with the assurance that he/she would participate under the terms of these arrangements as outlined. The bishop would be designated as an episcopal assistant to the Metropolitan.
- 2) When a diocese has agreed to Shared Episcopal Ministry through a synod resolution the costs of that ministry, like all episcopal ministry is deemed to be an expense of the diocese. A suitable budget must also be agreed to between the individual parish and the diocese for the provision of Shared Episcopal Ministry.
- 3) If the incumbent and members of the parish believe that they cannot work with their bishop in the light of the current disagreements on issues of human sexuality, the rector and the canonically designated lay leadership shall meet with the bishop in a spirit of openness to seek reconciliation. After such a meeting, it is hoped that a mutually agreeable way forward can be found. If it is not a parish may elect the option of Shared Episcopal

Ministry by a resolution passing with a 2/3 majority of those present and voting at a duly constituted parish meeting<sup>1</sup>. The incumbent must also concur with the decision.

4) In order for the parish resolution to become effective the following provisions are to be followed:

a) The parish and the diocesan bishop would choose a suitable bishop from the provincial list to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry taking into account such things as theological perspective and proximity to the parish. Their decision will be conveyed to the Metropolitan who may be asked to assist with the process.

b) The parish would retain its voice and vote at synod and would be free to participate in the councils of the Church at all levels.

c) The parish must maintain its current and future financial commitments to the diocese.

d) The parish would be free to undertake new Church developments subject to diocesan procedures.

e) Both the parish and the diocesan bishop would review the decision every three years or earlier if desired.

5) The duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows. The diocese would insure that wide ranges of theological perspectives were represented on the committee dealing with postulants for ordination.

6) In the event that the parish seeking Shared Episcopal Ministry is in the diocese of the Metropolitan the senior bishop by date of consecration would fulfill the role given to the Metropolitan.

The model described above is designed to deal with the circumstances in which all sides acknowledge that there is a level of dissent between a parish and their diocesan bishop,

---

<sup>1</sup> Whenever the term parish meeting is used in this document it refers to the full members of the parish that have the right to be present and to vote at its annual meeting as defined by the canons of the diocese

however negotiated oversight is feasible *Shared Episcopal Ministry* as defined can provide a means of episcopal pastoral care and direction for the parish.

## A Process in Circumstances requiring Conciliation

What follows is designed to deal with the circumstances in which all sides acknowledge that there is such a level of dissent and /or distrust between a parish and their diocesan bishop that negotiated oversight is not feasible To overcome the obstacle posed by such a high level of dissent, some means must be identified to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry from outside of the diocesan structure. The parish or the diocesan bishop may appeal to the Metropolitan using the following process.

1) The Metropolitan of each province would be responsible for assembling a list of current and retired bishops in good standing in the Canadian Church and who would be willing to participate in providing Shared Episcopal Ministry within the province. The provincial house of bishops must approve the list. The Metropolitan will not be included on the list for his/her Province. It would be important to have a number of bishops from different theological perspectives so that all parishes requesting Shared Episcopal Ministry might be served. A bishop from another province of the Communion would be eligible to be on The Metropolitan's list with the assurance that he/she would participate under the terms of these arrangements as outlined. The bishop would be designated as an episcopal assistant to the Metropolitan.

2) If the incumbent and members of the parish or the diocesan bishop believe that they cannot work together in the light of the current disagreements on issues of human sexuality, the rector and the canonically designated lay leadership shall meet with the bishop in a spirit of openness to seek reconciliation. After such a meeting, it is hoped that a mutually agreeable way forward can be found. If it is not, a parish may elect the option of Shared Episcopal Ministry by a resolution passing with a 2/3 majority of those present and voting at a duly constituted parish meeting<sup>2</sup>. The incumbent must also concur with the decision.

3) The diocesan bishop would seek the consent of his/her diocesan council (or equivalent) to implement Shared Episcopal Ministry. The parish or the diocesan bishop would advise the

---

<sup>2</sup> Whenever the term parish meeting is used in this document it refers to the full members of the parish that have the right to be present and to vote at its annual meeting as defined by the canons of the diocese

other party that they were petitioning the Metropolitan to appoint a bishop to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry.

4) The Metropolitan shall meet with all involved to endeavour to resolve the outstanding issues. The Metropolitan may request two others who are acceptable to both parties to join him/her to review the situation, to consider the appeal, and to make recommendations to all parties.

5) Prior to implementation the Metropolitan will have ensured that there is an agreement between the Parish and the diocese on how all costs related to Shared Episcopal Ministry will be borne, including diocesan assessment.

6) With the consent of the Diocesan Bishop and of the parish, the Metropolitan will appoint a bishop to provide Shared Episcopal Ministry from the list approved by the provincial house of bishops. The Metropolitan would take into account the question of reasonable proximity to the parish and diocese and the theological position of the parish.

7) The parish would retain its voice and vote at synod and would be free to participate in the councils of the Church at all levels.

8) The parish would be free to undertake new Church developments subject to diocesan procedures.

9) Both the parish and the diocesan bishop will review the decision every three years or earlier if desired.

10) The Duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows. The diocese would insure that wide ranges of theological perspectives were represented on the committee dealing with postulants for ordination.

11) In the event that the parish seeking Shared Episcopal Ministry is in the diocese of the Metropolitan the senior bishop by date of consecration would fulfill the role given to the Metropolitan.

## ***Conclusion***

Shared Episcopal Ministry provided under either circumstance is based on a spirit of reconciliation, co-operation and goodwill. In order not to institutionalize schism it is always to be understood as a temporary arrangement directed toward reconciliation between the parties. . Changes in parish or diocesan leadership are appropriate times for renewed efforts towards the ultimate goal of full restoration of the relationship between the parish and its bishop.

## ***Endnote***

The document says that

“The Duties of the bishop involved in Shared Episcopal Ministry takes as its point of origin the example of dioceses where there is/are suffragan bishop(s). He or she would not have jurisdiction but would be part of the process on appointments, episcopal visits, confirmations, pastoral care of clergy, advice on potential ordinands and participate in ordinations. This model would honour the process of appointment that each diocese currently follows”.

In reference to Suffragan bishops and appointments there are a variety of models that are followed across the Canadian Church

- In ***Huron*** the suffragan appoints and the diocesan signs the license
- In ***Nova Scotia and PEI*** the diocesan appoints and signs the license
- In ***Toronto*** the Area (or suffragan) signs the appointment letter and co-signs the license with the diocesan.

We would recommend that the diocesan bishop and the bishop involved with Shared Episcopal Ministry clarify the process they will use prior to the bishop beginning his/her ministry in a parish.