

SUMMARY RESPONSE TO REPORT ON ANGLICAN JOURNAL INVESTIGATION

September 2021

BACKGROUND: A proposed article on sexual harassment in the Church was in development. Anonymity and prepublication review of the article had been promised by the journalist to three female sources for the article. The editor of the Journal was away during the preparation of the article on parental leave. In light of the sensitivities of such an article a draft was shared with the Director of Communications, General Secretary and Primate. Believing it was a penultimate draft, it was shared by the General Secretary with dioceses/institutions reflected in the article. The sources felt betrayed by the sharing of the draft prior to their review. All copies were recalled. The journalist and editor resigned.

The Primate then asked an external reviewer, Mr. John Fraser, to conduct an investigation into the process for handling the article and to offer his observations and recommendations. That review was completed and the final report delivered on August 11, 2021. The primate met individually with those who were willing who had been interviewed to hear their responses in the week of August 23rd. The primate additionally met with Mr. Ian Alexander who had shared in the redesign of the communications structures in 2019 but had not seen a copy of the article.

OBSERVATIONS

At the outset I must acknowledge that this has been a painful incident for all involved but especially so for the sense of betrayal felt by the sources for the article and for the journalist and editor who felt it necessary to resign. Although we may, and must, learn much from this incident it cannot erase the harm done. We are committed to ensuring that it does not happen again and ensuring the integrity of our journalistic practices now and in the future. It was never intended that the article not be published.

I also want to affirm the importance and value of *The Anglican Journal* in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada. The excellence and integrity of *The Journal* is a valued part of our life as a Church. It does however have a unique and particular role in two, sometimes conflicting, activities. It tells our story to the members of the Church, highlighting news and activities across a vast geography and diversity of expressions. It also holds up a mirror of accountability and critique to whether we are living up to the mission we claim for ourselves under the Gospel. It is not simply to tell good news. It encourages and challenges; it praises and critiques; though it is expected that its critique will be done in ways that nurture positive change, learning and growth for the Church as a whole. I have every confidence that *The Journal* has done that in the past and will continue to do so in the future though I recognize that holding this tension carries stress at times for the editor and journalists.

It is clear that the structure for Communications, including *The Journal*, that was approved by General Synod in July 2019 has not been adequately implemented. The changes to the Communications Committee; addition of the Editorial Board and clarification of responsibilities of various staff and management have not been thoroughly discussed and there is confusion of roles and expectations. This combined with new personnel in key positions since July 2019 (Director of Communications, Primate, General Secretary) exacerbated a challenging situation which was further exacerbated by the pandemic.

The current situation is primarily a systemic issue resulting from this lack of clarity, misinformation and situational circumstances that are not the responsibility of any single person alone.

Let me express my gratitude to Mr. John Fraser for taking on the task of the Review. His commitment to excellence in journalism, his experience on the Media Council of Canada, and his affinity to the Anglican Church of Canada were particular gifts to us in this process. He gave many hours of time to the needed listening and to writing his report. His observations and recommendations have assisted us to more fully understand how the problems occurred and to consider next steps for remedial action.

Each of the participants I met affirmed their appreciation for John's listening to their experience in this process and care in checking back to affirm he had heard correctly. Neither the former editor nor journalist agreed to participate in the follow-up, though were invited.

NEXT STEPS & RESPONSE

1. I have read and considered carefully the observations and recommendations in the final report in light of our current structures, the history of the Journal, and best practices for the future. These have been considered with the comments of each of the participants. I am therefore committed to the following next steps:

Phase One: Full clarification and implementation of the structure created at GS2019

- a. **Communications Committee** – to review of role and responsibilities in light of new structure and clear expectations articulated for the Committee vis a vis other bodies (Editorial Board; Director of Communications)
- b. **Editorial Board** – to review its role and responsibilities – including
 - i. Development and clear articulation of best journalistic policies and practices for the Anglican *Journal/Epiphanies* where those are not currently in place (eg. Is use of anonymous sources possible in a small connected community like the Anglican Church of Canada? If so – how?)
 - ii. Critical path for preparation of articles be discussed and committed to specially vis a vis Editor/Editorial Board/Director of Communications/Other Management – to maintain maximum journalistic independence and accountability.
- c. **Director of Communications** – Clarification of role in relation to:
 - i. Communications Committee
 - ii. Editor of *The Journal*
 - iii. Primate/General Secretary
- d. **General Secretary/Primate** – clarification of roles in relation to:
 - i. Director of Communications
 - ii. Editor of *The Journal*
 - iii. Publishing of critical material with best journalism practices
- e. An advisory team – consisting of the Rev. Dr. Karen Egan and Mr. Ian Alexander – will be appointed to assist with Step 1 and monitor progress over the next 18 months.

Phase Two

2. The new structure will need time, in partnership with a new Editor of *The Journal*, to test its capacity to undergird the communication needs of the Church and the integrity of The Journal. Following at least 18 months of functioning in this structure, after the above clarifications, a review be undertaken to evaluate whether changes are needed to this structure. This must not preclude regular communication to address any areas of tension or uncertainty during that time.
3. This report will be shared, in camera, with the Council of General Synod at its next meeting.
4. I will meet with the Communications Committee and the Editorial Board to share this report as soon as possible.