



The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara

Anglican Church of Canada

The Anglican Diocese of Niagara pleased with Court decision

May 5th, 2008

Hamilton, Ontario

The Anglican Church of Canada's Diocese of Niagara today responded to the decision of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Madam Justice Jane A. Milanetti found that three Anglican parishes, St. Hilda's in Oakville and St. George's in Lowville, and The Church of the Good Shepherd, St. Catharine's should be shared by both the departing congregants and the members loyal to The Diocese of Niagara. The Diocese was pleased in the decision, and is now anxious to move forward.

Spokesperson for the Diocese, Archdeacon Michael D. Patterson, stated: "We are obviously very pleased with the decision, Madam Justice Milanetti accepted our proposal for sharing and joint administration as a logical interim solution. We feel that we were completely justified in resorting to the courts after negotiations failed. We can now provide ministry for loyal members of the Diocese and move forward to safeguard the physical heritage of the Churches, which were built by and have served generations of Anglicans."

Members of the Diocese indicated that they are still anxious to pursue constructive dialogue with those in the Church who have taken a different view throughout this matter. Said Patterson, "There has always been room for a range of views within the Church. We seek unity, not uniformity. We wish to ensure dialogue continues in the hopes that the resolution of this matter will be acceptable to all."

Patterson further addressed the issue of ministering to all those in the affected parishes, "We will continue to minister to the whole faith community, to ensure that no one is abandoned, even those who may have taken a different view throughout this matter. This should be the most important goal for all of us."

The Synod of the Diocese of Niagara's mission is to ensure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is accessible and proclaimed to all people by ensuring vibrant and healthy faith communities. The Diocese of Niagara, one of thirty dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada, was formed in 1875.

For more information:

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Background Information:

Recently in the Anglican Church of Canada's Diocese of Niagara, some members of three of our parishes have sought to separate from the Church. At issue have been numerous matters, most of which have focussed on decisions of the synods of the National Church and The Diocese of Niagara regarding the blessing of same sex unions. These Synods have not authorized such blessing but are discussing the possibility.

No one, of course, is compelled to remain within the Church. Faith is a deeply personal matter in which the Church and the faithful come together so that each individually, and all of us as a family, can work to deepen our relationship with Christ. The Church is about unity, not uniformity.

And so, those of us who have been active in the ministry of the Church for the Diocese have preferred to proceed by dialogue, rather than in the courts. Unfortunately, the separating parishioners have been unable to take this path. They have found it necessary not only to leave the Anglican Church, but they also wanted to take with them its physical heritage: buildings, properties, cemeteries and other legacies that were built by, and have served countless generations of Anglicans. The Diocese could obviously not accede to such a request. Thus, we found ourselves in court.

On May 5th, 2008, the Court decided that it was completely logical that until the final ownership of the properties is decided, both the withdrawing congregations and the members of The Diocese of Niagara should share access to the buildings.

We were very pleased with the decision of the Court. This allows this Church to fulfill its obligation to minister to its members while we await a final ruling as to the ownership of the properties. We believe it is our responsibility to protect the physical heritage of buildings, properties, cemeteries and other legacies that were entrusted to the Diocese of Niagara and the Anglican Church of Canada.

We remain firmly of the view that the clergy and the faithful of the Diocese must work together to find a course for dialogue. The goal we all share should be to find solutions that are acceptable to all our members.

Most importantly of all, we have much work to do to ensure that no one is abandoned – whether they have agreed with the Church in this matter or not – that all have access to the ministry of the Church and can continue to practise their faith. This should be the most important goal for all of us.