



The Ecclesiastical Province of BC & Yukon Anglican Church of Canada

Archbishop's Address to the 2018 Provincial Synod September 14, 2018

As I begin this address it seems right to thank many, many people, some of whom we will also thank later with gifts. Thank you, Randall Fairey, Clara Plamondon, Cheryl Hunt, Douglas MacAdams, Kathryn Lockhart, Terry Beppe, members of the Synod Planning Committee (Neil Elliott etc), members of the Provincial Council and members of the Executive Committee. I offer my thanks and all our thanks to you in that you have held up under the many questions I have had as a new Archbishop and, of course, you have put in many hours of preparation for this Synod. I'd also like to thank the Sorrento Centre and its new Executive Director, The Rev. Michael Shapcott for hosting us again in this wonderful place, and, though he is not here, to thank Archbishop John Privett whose careful hand-off to me was superb.

As I mentioned in the sermon, it seems right to me that we begin our Provincial Synod on Holy Cross Day, the day we are reminded that at the centre of who we are and what we're about is God's costly, fearless, humble love for all of us, a love that shows itself to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Through this love, God turns us from strangers into friends, transforms us from a scattered group of diverse individuals into the people of God.

And so for me, the question is this: what might this love, this costly, fearless, humble love for all of us, this love that turns us into friends and into the people of God, look like in the Ecclesiastical Province of BC and Yukon? For we are a province of great size and diversity. We are 1,430,000 square kilometers large and include towns and communities very different from one another: Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, Whitehorse, Prince Rupert, Tofino, Surrey, Dawson, Campbell River, Kelowna, Williams Lake, Masset, Litton, Alert Bay, Smithers (to name a few). We are a province that is urban, rural and suburban, that has towns and villages and remote tiny communities. We are a province that includes 198 distinct Indigenous nations in BC and six principal Indigenous groups in the Yukon. We are a province that with Indigenous peoples, immigrants and settlers, unceded territories and treaty lands. We have young and old, poor and rich and somewhere in between, single, married, partnered and befriended, housed and homeless, straight and LGBTQ. And, of

course, we have evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics, broad church folks, experimental church communities and those that simply can't be defined by any category. We have seminary trained clergy, locally trained clergy, ministers of presence. We have paid—fulltime, part-time and sometime paid clergy and non-stipendiary clergy. We have bishops who work fulltime in their episcopal roles and bishops who are also working in parishes. And we have other diversities that I am woefully ignorant of.

Given all of this, how can we enact God's costly, fearless and humble love for all, a love that makes us friends and transforms us into the people of God—here in this Ecclesiastical Province? How do we do this among ourselves, between ourselves and the different communities we find ourselves in and within the Anglican Church of Canada on a national level?

The challenge is the challenge of honoring all our distinctly different identities, contexts and ways of being while at the same time abiding in and acting from the unity, the identity of a holy people that God has given us in Christ. But the opportunity, the opportunity, is this: if we can, with God's help, do this, that is abide in our unity in the midst of our diversity, in our life as a Province, maybe, just maybe, we can be a witness to God's unity within diversity to the broader Anglican Church of Canada which, in turn, can be a witness to a broader culture that is easily polarized and routinely fragmented on account of differences.

And so to say it in a different way, we in this Province have the opportunity to enact and to witness to God's costly, fearless and humble love for all in the way we give ourselves to each other, in the way we practice forbearance with one another and in the way we go the extra mile, the sacrificial mile, to understand and honour one another's experience and try to make room for that experience. We'll get to practice this at this Synod, of course, in our discussions of the potential change in the marriage canon, but it is not just about the marriage canon—it's about the cultivation of a kind of spirit that I hope can be a hallmark of this Province in all we do over the next three years.

But what about the specific content of our work during this time? Here are some ideas I have about this:

First, I very much want us to bring the work of this Province under the leadership of Metropolitan John Privett to fruition—to make some decisions, and after the decisions are made, to implement them. What I'm talking about here is the work on Safe Church resources and the approval of the BCYAYM memorandum of understanding. These two important initiatives, which represent hours and hours of costly love on the part of those who have worked on them, aim to provide, in the first

instance, a richer array of training resources to keep people safe in our churches and, in the second instance, the kind of healthy foundational structure that will sustain the life of BCYAYM for the next generation. But, of course, making these decisions at our Synod will not be enough.

We need to implement what needs to be implemented in these important areas after we have made the decision about both of them. Maybe it should go without saying, but I want to say it anyway—any important decision is only as good as our implementation after the fact. And so as we discuss these two matters in our upcoming Synod, we will need to identify what the concrete steps will need to occur to make them real.

And finally in terms of continuing the good work of this Synod begun under the leadership of Archbishop John, we will need to follow through with continued meetings among bishops, executive officers or others about what else we might want to collaborate on. Our goal in doing this will be to respect the particular character of a diocese and its people while at the same time work in areas that help us all make the best use of our collective resources.

Second, I want us to deepen our knowledge, experience and connection to one another. The physical distances between our dioceses here in the West and the North are large, and, of course, we all have much to keep us busy. All of which means we need to find ways to stay in touch and ways to bring people together either virtually or in person. What I'd like to do, then, is to create a few simple communication vehicles that might keep the Provincial Bishops and Provincial leadership stay connected and updated on what we are all doing, the challenges we are all facing and the needs we may have of each other. I'd also like to explore how we might enrich the cross-cultural formation of younger leaders so that those who come after us function with a real appreciation for the diversity, beauty and challenges of the different communities within our Province. What would it be like, for instance, for a person in formation for the priesthood in Vancouver, BC to spend time in an Inuit community in the Yukon? Likewise, what would it be like for a newly ordained person in Caledonia to spend time at the Abbey Church in Victoria?

Or would such an aim take a different shape? Would it be about bringing together those we believe will be the next generation of leaders in our dioceses for a time of intense community building and sharing of the real issues they are dealing with in their contexts, the result of which will be wiser leaders and strengthened relationships within the province?

Finally, transitions in our dioceses. Over the next two to three years, big transitions will be happening in many of our dioceses. A number of our bishops will be retiring or planning to retire. How can we support each other, if desired, in this time, in the case of transitioning bishops, beyond the canonically specified functions of the Archbishop's office? How can the bishops work together in a way before an election in a way that avoids the situation that occurred in the first election in the Diocese of Caledonia? How can we together take some initiative to encourage good and qualified people to be nominated and to be willing to put themselves forward for nomination? And after an election, how can we surround the new bishop and the new diocesan partnership with tangible acts of support and encouragement? But, of course, the transition of bishops is not the only transition before us. We will need to continue to work on and support the different shape our ministries will be taking in the future. The work of WECAN, though not a Provincial initiative, will be important to support, participate in and watch as we all work on the formation of congregational leaders. The work the Diocese of BC and New Westminster will be doing on the diaconate is also important. The way that dioceses themselves operate with fewer resources—this is also a crucial part of the transition that we find ourselves in.

When Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, that Christian community chock full of conflict, questions and differences, after all the advice he gave them, the thing he ultimately came back to was the cross of Christ. He said this in the Epistle reading assigned for today:

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Tomorrow as we begin the business of our Provincial Synod, as we explore what it means to walk together as a Province of astonishing diversity here and over the next three years, remember that the unity we seek in all our diversity is something that has already been given us in the Cross of Christ. In God's costly, fearless, humble love for us and for all