

CHAPTER TWO

Crisis? What Crisis?

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known that on this day what would bring you peace- but now it is hidden from your eyes."

Luke 19:41-42

As I have already declared, a major reason for my speaking out at this time is my conviction that the Anglican Church of Canada is in a state of profound crisis. Unless proper action is taken there is a real danger that this once great institution, still rich with tradition and potential, will come to serious grief. This will result in significant loss not only to its members, but also to the entire Christian community in Canada. I will now explore the symptoms of this crisis as well as its effects upon the various segments of the church. This will establish its reality in all our minds and is the necessary first step toward recovery. In the course of this examination certain patterns will emerge, the most significant of which is the increasing fragmentation of the church along a hundred different lines.

Symptom 1: The Membership Blues

No Church can exist without members. When membership is rising there is inevitably a sense of institutional well-being. When it is falling the opposite is true. Much of the sense of crisis in the ACC can be traced to this one hard truth: membership has been dropping steadily since the high point reached long ago in the early 1960s.

In 1961 there were 1,358,000 persons on the rolls and by 1994 this figure had been cut almost in half to 781,000. By 2007, the last year for which published statistics are available, the number

was 545,957. This precipitous 60% drop in absolute numbers is bad enough but it took place while Canada's general population was growing. Thus, Anglicans went from being 7% of the population to only 1.7%. Admittedly these numbers are only a very rough guide to one's "place" in society, but they have had a significant negative impact on the Anglican self-image. They also mask an even harder truth well known to anyone who is familiar with the maintaining of parish rolls: of those officially listed as "members", only a small percentage of them are actually attend and give.

There is every reason to expect that this downward membership trend is merely the lull before the storm. This is the inescapable conclusion to any careful consideration of the particular composition of the current membership and how it came into being. *For a closer look soon reveals the startling truth that the contemporary church is largely comprised of elderly women.* One has only to attend almost any Anglican service in any Anglican parish in order to verify this reality. And thank God for them!

Since the 1960s there has indeed been a mass exodus. We might call this the first shoe to drop, consisting mostly of younger people, while their elders, especially their mothers, have tended to remain faithful. This trend is borne out by the statistics. While the membership as a whole declined by "only" 50% from 1961 to 1994, baptisms fell 60% and Sunday School attendance and confirmations fell a whopping 80%. Significantly, burials have only decreased by 15%. These trends have ensured that the Anglican population still has a hugely disproportionate number of older females. These women, largely responsible for parish vitality since the 1960s and who make up a great percentage of its membership, are going to pass away in the next few years. That is the other shoe. Their natural replacements, their children and grandchildren, have largely vanished from the pew. Unless things change considerably, greater membership decline lies ahead. There is a real generation gap and the church is in serious danger of falling into it very soon.

Once all of the leftovers from the boom years of the 1960s have died, the Church will finally bottom out at its natural sustainable level in contemporary society. It is so bad that a recent

article in the Globe and Mail strongly suggested that the ACC was even facing the threat of extinction¹. Although this is unlikely, the continuing decline of the membership is naturally sending tremors of angst throughout the denomination. It has enormous implications for every aspect of its life. Significant cutbacks have already begun to take place in every diocese both in the number of parishes and the clergy who serve them. This is not a pleasant time for the laity or for the clergy.

The exodus from the ACC has been accelerated by many members who have left for other denominations because they no longer identified with its liberal theological drift. I encountered this in the early '80's when I spoke to a key leader in the parish who had departed for another denomination just before I arrived as rector. The bishops had recently declared that non-practicing homosexuals would not be barred from ordination and it was this that sent him packing. Nothing I could say would convince him that the Anglican Church was not in peril for its very soul. At that time the homosexual issue was just a small cloud on the horizon, but he saw it as the final nail in the Anglican coffin. And so he, like many before and since, walked away from the church of his birth and which he had served so faithfully.

In fact, there have been so many disaffected Anglicans willing to leave that in 2005 a group of them formed what would become the Anglican Network in Canada (ANiC). A number of parishes, including several large and active ones, have left the ACC for ANiC. As of this writing six of their nine bishops are retired bishops from the ACC. In 2009 it became a diocese in a new denomination, the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) which is under the ecclesiastical oversight of the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America. At present, the Anglican Church of North America is trying to gain admittance into and obtaining official recognition from the Anglican Communion.

ANiC now reports an average Sunday attendance of 4800, which is larger than at least thirteen of the dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada. This is a significant number all by itself but

¹ Michael Valpy, February 9, 2010

when one considers the fact that it includes a high percentage of active, enthusiastic and giving Christians that have been lost to the ACC, the impact is all the greater. Besides this, ANiC provides a place to go for disaffected Anglicans who want to remain Anglicans, place that they did not have before. In other words it applies yet more grease to the slide.

Symptom 2: Of Decayed Evangelism

Given the twin realities of serious past and future membership decline it would be natural to assume that the Anglican Church of Canada would be mobilizing all its energies toward the reversal of the situation. This is not happening.

While it is true that some efforts have been made in the field of “membership development”, they have met with only modest success. Oddly, some parishes have resisted even the mildest of suggestions that would make them more attractive and inviting to outsiders. Even installing such things as more readable signs out front or user-friendly coat rooms seems to be too much. Whatever one thinks of such efforts, even where employed they certainly do not seem to have made any significant impact on the numbers.

What is needed are *new* members, people who have never been attenders. They are needed in significant numbers if the church is to avoid continuing the kind of drastic and painful downsizing that is already underway (see Symptom 1). For churches there are only a few possible sources of new members.

Traditionally it is the children of current members who step into the traces and take up the slack. As we have already seen, however, it is precisely the child-bearing age group that has already left or dropped out, taking their children with them. Many rectors have observed the valiant efforts of grandparents to bring their grandchildren to Church, but again this seems not to have stopped the receding tide. The advancing age of most Anglicans also precludes any serious expectation of a baby boom in the foreseeable future!

Another possibility is that the church might acquire new members because of defections from other denominations. While it is true that the ACC has enjoyed modest success from this source, especially in reference to its clergy, there is nothing to suggest that it will bring significant number through the doors. The significant flow, as we have experienced it, is in exactly the opposite direction: people leaving for other denominations.

Next, we might remember that in the past Anglicans have benefited from the waves of new immigrants that have come to Canada. Much of New Brunswick, where I live, was originally settled by Loyalists escaping the American Revolution. Naturally they brought their Church of England faith with them. However, given the current patterns of immigration, this is an unlikely possibility in our time. Perhaps things will change and there will be a mass influx of, say, Nigerians. To count on this for our salvation as a Church, however, would surely signal the depth of our desperation.

Finally, it is possible that modern secularized people will recognize and appreciate the efforts of the leadership of the ACC to appear more in tune with the spirit of the age. Their relative silence on specifically spiritual matters while taking left/liberal stands on a number of public issues will no doubt attract some. Most Anglican parishes are genuine multigenerational communities and one would think that this would prove meaningful to many in a fragmented age. But it is proving difficult to get them through the doors and into the pews in significant numbers.

There remains but one possible way of truly increasing Church membership – evangelism. By this I mean, for purposes of this discussion, the changing of nominal Christians or unbelievers into fully committed and attending believers. Here, at least, there is serious potential! There are millions of unchurched Canadians and, according to Statistics Canada, even hundreds of thousands who still identify themselves as Anglicans but who are not active members of the church.

Not only is this true but it is generally acknowledged that there is a renewed interest in spiritual matters among Canadians. There seems to be an increasing dissatisfaction with the answers offered by the secular world's shallow but increasingly shrill ideologies that come and go. Science and technology still offer no answers to the deeper questions of life.

But all this does not mean that the general public is about to show up at our fonts in droves! All denominations are facing similar issues in a society that views Christianity from a "been there, done that" perspective, not to mention that our all too real moral failures have naturally left a sour taste in the mouth of many. It is going to be an uphill slog to learn effective means of presenting the Gospel to such a crowd.

However, the Christian church has done it all before. The Early Church went from 120 to 3000 on one day and never looked back. Without a strong emphasis on the conversion of "pagans" to the faith, the history of Western civilization would have been considerably different. England itself would have remained a pagan nation and there never would have been a Church of England. While at times, as in the Crusades, this aspect of the mission of the Church was often misdirected, at times neglected, and usually entwined with cultural imperialism, it has nevertheless remained a vital characteristic of the faith. In the last century, with the expansion of the Empire there was a renewed emphasis on the evangelism of the newly encountered peoples of North America and elsewhere. The direct result of this effort is that the Anglican Church of Canada today has a very strong indigenous component. To evangelize is a significant part of our history, even if mistakes were made along the way.

It is also part of our present, at least in other parts of the Anglican communion. In Kenya and in Chile, in Singapore and in Tegucigalpa, Anglicans are evangelizing with enthusiasm and with success, sometimes spectacular success. When the bishops of the Communion met at Lambeth in 1988 they affirmed evangelism as "the primary task" of the Church and committed the whole communion to a Decade of Evangelism in the 1990's.

With all of this in mind it would seem logical to expect that the Anglican Church of Canada would have long ago mobilized a great effort directed at the evangelization of Canadian society. Sadly, this is not the case. There have been a few initiatives at the National level, mostly aimed at looking at ways to facilitate local evangelism. General Synod has taken a bit of its time to look at and discuss a video produced in association with the visit to Canada of the present Archbishop of Canterbury. It was entitled, prophetically for the ACC, "One Generation from Extinction". But within the overall agenda of General Synod, which dedicated hours and hours to the changing of Church structures, evangelism found itself at the back of the bus.

It is hard to escape the impression that, as a whole, the Church shows but a token interest in evangelism. Undoubtedly there is more talk than action. At least it was on the agenda of General Synod and did get discussed to some degree. But nothing was done to make it a priority. No great sums of money were dedicated to the task. It is difficult to see how the efforts of the National leadership will result in much evangelism actually being done.

It is worth noting that, to the surprise of some of my readers, perhaps, for generations the ACC had an organization within it dedicated to the practice of evangelism. I am referring to the Church Army which got its start in Canada toward the beginning of the twentieth century. It was never large but over the years its lay "Captains" worked in many parishes to extend the kingdom locally. In fact, Larry Robertson, bishop of Yukon, David Parsons, bishop of the Arctic, and David Edwards, bishop of Fredericton, were all CA evangelists earlier in their ministries. Unfortunately, the CA came to feel more and more unwelcome by the Anglican establishment. For this and other reasons CA felt it was called to change its name to Threshold Ministries and become a non-denominational organization.

However, that is not to say that there are no Anglicans at all engaged on this front. In 1991 The Institute of Evangelism was established at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Wycliffe is a theological college independent of diocesan structures and has its roots and ethos in the evangelical tradition of the Anglican Church. The Institute was established to train Wycliffe students in evangelism and

provide resources for the same to the wider church and is still going strong. It has not reached its stated goal of helping every parish to be an evangelizing community, but it has made considerable progress in that direction, at least for those relative few who are interested. Perhaps it is too early to say if these efforts will do much to reverse the overall trend.

As well, many parishes have participated in evangelism programs such as The Alpha Course. Oddly enough this program originated at Holy Trinity, Brompton, in the Church of England and has been used in many different denominations and contexts with some success. Now running in 100 countries in 100 languages, over 24 million people have taken the course, and many have come to faith. It is a short course in which people are invited into conversation about faith in Jesus Christ. A number of Canadian Anglican churches have found it helpful, but many struggle to make it a regular feature of their outreach.

Finally, in the Diocese of Fredericton, at least, consistent efforts have been made by the bishop (David Edwards) to stimulate his clergy to change from a maintenance mode to a mission mode. While this is a welcome beginning, most of clergy came into ministry not as evangelists but as chaplains. This was, and to some degree remains, our basic outlook and it is very difficult to change. But first of all, we have to change our minds and attitudes and this is starting to happen given the pressures we are all facing. The next step is to channel our new understandings and priorities into practical action at the parish level. No doubt other dioceses are making similar efforts but it is still too soon to predict if they will bear fruit. But you have to plant the seed first! Will it take root, grow and flourish? Only time will tell, and we may be running short of time.

The bottom line is that we are left with a National Church that apparently has little or no prospect of reversing the membership loss that has already taken place or that will take place in the next few years. The usual means of increasing membership are either out of reach or, in the case of evangelism, virtually ignored by the establishment. For a number of reasons, then, the Anglican Church of Canada, in a time of great pressure to find a way to add new members, it is unable or unwilling to evangelize. Even evangelical Anglicans are failing at evangelism. There appears to

be no way of avoiding further drastic membership reduction and the trauma that will accompany it. This is surely an institution in serious crisis.

Symptom 3: The Falling Dollar

When parishioners by the thousands left the Anglican Church they naturally took their wallets with them! This would have had a crippling effect except for two additional developments. Those Anglicans who remained have done an exceptional job of reaching deeper into their pockets to support the Church. Although most parishioners are still a long way from tithing (giving the biblical 1/10 of their income) they are no longer merely token givers. This has enabled the Church not only to survive but to increase its spending considerably in spite of membership losses. There has also been an increasing dependence upon endowments left to the Church by the faithful departed: these, at least, *have* left their wallets behind! Without these gifts from the past many parishes would not be able to come close to balancing their budgets.

In spite of these developments, however, there is growing evidence that the denomination is settling into a serious financial crisis. Expenses have risen faster than inflation as clergy salaries and benefits, the major segment of parish budgets, have been raised to the level of other professionals, maintenance of older buildings has become an ever-increasing burden, and Church bureaucracy, until very recently, has become something of a growth industry.

These factors, among others, combined with the continuing decline in membership (soon to speed up considerably), would suggest that current giving is very close to being "maxed out", if not in actually dropping. The modest response to recent appeals points in this same direction. Efforts are being doubled to convince an increasingly aging membership to leave its money to the Church in their wills. It does not stop there. The latest program involves persuading members to purchase life insurance which names the Church as both owner and beneficiary. The Communion of Saints will apparently require a very long offertory hymn! At the same time, because Anglicans do not yet approach the tithe in their giving (as Christians in some other

denominations do), many Church officials remain convinced that the needed money "is still out there" in people's pockets. The problem is that few appear to be excited about giving it to the Church.

If this has created enormous stress at the parish level, the problem is even worse at the National and Diocesan levels. This is largely because of the way in which these levels of Church administration are funded. Individual Anglicans do not support these bureaucracies directly like citizens who send their taxes directly to the federal and provincial governments. Instead, they give only toward the budget of their own parish. The latter is then expected to forward part of its budgeted income to its own diocese as its "fair share" of diocesan expenses. The amount asked of each parish is determined by an agreed-upon formula.

In turn, the dioceses include the National Church as part of their budgets. Almost all of the National Church income comes from the dioceses. As a result of this system most parishioners are much more aware of the fact that the parish supports the diocese than they are of the fact that the diocese forwards a significant proportion of that support to the National Church. For example, about 1/10 of the budget of the Diocese of Fredericton is forwarded on to Toronto and about ½ of that total budget is contributed by the parishes.

While such a system worked reasonably well in good times when parishes were able to pay their own expenses and still send significant "fair shares" to the diocese, it has proven very vulnerable when local expenses began to eat up more and more of parish budgets. The first thing to be cut is often the diocesan "fair share" because it is usually not seen as a necessary expense (as compared with the rector's stipend or the oil for the furnace). It is often a significant proportion of the parish budget and cutting it does not affect local program. Thus diocesan income takes a direct hit and it, in turn, finds its National apportionment an attractive item to cut for exactly the same reasons. In this way the National Church suffers disproportionately when financial times take a turn for the worse.

An editorial in the February 1996 Anglican Journal referred to this as the "domino effect". While indications are that parish income is at least holding its own if not increasing, diocesan income from the parishes is indeed falling. In turn dioceses are cutting the amounts they send on to the National level. The 1996 national apportionment budget was down almost \$600,000 from the previous year. In spite of official denials to the contrary, there is little doubt that the recent "restructuring" (down-sizing) of General Synod was at least in part forced on the institution because of this declining revenue. Bureaucracies, including church bureaucracies, have an innate drive to expand and contract only when compelled by outside forces. Given the likelihood of actual cuts in parish income (due to the anticipated attendance drop), we can expect the problem at the Diocesan and National levels to get a lot worse before it gets better, if it ever does. This has cast a very real pall over the Church's sense of well-being.

These trends are also part of the underlying and disturbing pattern of fragmentation that is taking place in the Anglican Church of Canada. There seems to be a definite rise in parochialism, as parishes become more focused on their own immediate needs and less on the needs of the wider Anglican community. The ties that bind the parishes to each other, to the diocese and to the National Church, seem to be much weaker than they have been in the past.

One often hears bishops referring to the diocese as the "basic unit of the church" but this is not a reality for most Anglicans. For them the basic unit is the parish. Perhaps we are evolving into congregationalists! While this may be too radical a conclusion, it does underline the sense in which our episcopal system of church government is under siege. Parishes are more interested in doing their own thing and this is part of what I mean by "fragmentation". The centre may not hold.

Symptom 4: Indecent Disorder

When a society or an institution is in trouble it invariably descends into chaos. While it may be going too far to claim that the Anglican Church of Canada is in chaos, there are enough indications

of serious disorder to suggest that it is not far from that state. This disorder, which I have called fragmentation, is all more vivid when seen against the backdrop of Anglicanism's famous passion that "all things might be done decently and in order" (I Corinthians 14:40, KIV). In what follows I will outline the main areas in which "indecent disorder" has taken hold. Each one is disturbing enough on its own but taken together the picture is truly alarming.

There is no question that liturgy is at the centre of Anglican life and identity. Up until quite recently it was the great pride of the Church that wherever you went in the worldwide Anglican Communion the worship in any parish church would be from virtually the same Book of Common Prayer. Canadians would return home from a trip to Australia and relate this phenomenon with warm amazement. Here they were on the other side of the world, able to worship with their accustomed familiarity. It made them feel at home and truly a part of a spiritual family that transcended geographic and political boundaries.

Most of this came about through the extension of the British Empire. Wherever it went the Prayer Book went as well. For a variety of reasons, including its deeply biblical theology and incomparable use of language, the Book of Common Prayer issued in 1662 became the established liturgy of the Church of England for three hundred years. While minor variations were introduced in different countries and over time, it remained largely intact. In Canada the last revision was published in 1962.

With the arrival of the liturgical renewal movement of the early 1970's things began to change considerably. New liturgies, especially for the Eucharist, were experimented with throughout the Church. There was an assumption that after a period of experimentation the Church would authorize one set of contemporary services for common use. That is, the whole Canadian Church would settle down to worship either with the BCP or the new services or both. Most Anglicans could see the value in this even if they didn't agree with all the changes in the new book.

Most of these expectations seem to have been met with the publication of the Book of

Alternative Services in 1985. True, the Church no longer was unified by liturgy but at least there was a sense that we could live with just the two patterns of common prayer. Those who desired worship in other contemporary forms, for example, were discouraged and told that they would have to convince the rest of the Church to revise the BAS before they could do so. Officially, at least, the Anglican instinct for common prayer was still alive.

Unofficially, however, it has been a different story. Even as the BAS was being introduced at least one diocesan bishop was telling his clergy that the ultimate goal of liturgical renewal was that each parish would have its own do it yourself liturgy! These would share a similar shape but would be largely customized to the needs and emphases of each particular congregation. He went on to demonstrate by leading the clergy in an "extempore" Eucharist, more or less making it up as he went. At the same time, he followed the general pattern of eucharistic worship that had emerged from recent liturgical scholarship.

While this approach did not really catch on at the time, things have nevertheless continued to develop in the same direction. There are a number of evangelical parishes, for example, who were not happy with the BAS but still wanted a contemporary service. Some of them have just put together their own liturgy with or without the explicit permission of their bishop. Others simply omitted or changed the portions of the BAS which caused offence. At the other end of the theological spectrum more radical liberals "experimented" with new liturgies that more directly reflected their concerns than did the BAS.

All of this led to considerable pressure at official levels to push on beyond the BAS without actually revising the book itself. The Evaluation Commission on the Book of Alternative Services recommended that supplementary material be prepared which would contain a number of different contemporary language eucharistic rites. One would be "inclusive in its language about God", one would "embody Reformed theological conscience" (the theology of the Book of Common Prayer in modern language) and one would "allow local communities to explore ways of including native spiritual traditions and other cultural expressions that are in keeping with

Christian worship" (General Synod 1995 Report, p.10). After some revisions, General Synod accepted their recommendations and the material is now available online along with two Services of the Word.

In spite of this tendency toward "uncommon prayer" it must be said that the BAS seems to have become the regular liturgy in most parishes, even if many make changes of one kind or another. Some of these are fairly minor, while others might extend even to the insertion of a different Creed. The BAS has virtually replaced the BCP, but it does not have the same unifying force: it has a lot of variety, it is much modified and other forms have been authorized. Besides that, many parishes use liturgies from other countries that speak more clearly of their theology than does the BAS. Some parishes continue to put together their own services from various sources.

If it is true to say that for three hundred years the Book of Common Prayer served as a key ingredient of the glue that held the Church together, it is also true to say that the BAS has only done the same for a portion of it, those in the middle. There seems to be some movement to revise the BAS but it is not at all clear how the National Church is going to proceed with liturgical change at this stage. Given the divisions we have been considering, it is no wonder that revision does not seem to have a very high priority.

One of the things that is actually tending to hold the ACC together, perhaps, is the use of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL). In the early 1980's the RCL was introduced into the ACC and when the BAS was published it included the RCL, an ecumenical effort originating in the Roman Catholic Mass Lectionary. On a three-year cycle and including an Old Testament reading, this exposes the church-going Anglican to a lot more of the Bible because the Book of Common Prayer had the same Epistle and Gospel on a given Sunday each year. That can't be a bad thing! However, the RCL is not used universally in the ACC, and at least one Diocese excludes its use.

One of the former signs of Anglican unity and order was the fact that the vast majority of the parishes not only worshipped with one liturgy, but they also sang from the same hymn book.

From the largest cathedrals to the lowliest of country churches one found neatly arranged pairs of "red books" (BCPs) and "blue books" (Book of Common Praise (1938)) waiting the arrival of worshippers.

In a few parishes this is still the case, but it is probably accurate to say that most Anglican congregations worship with the "green book" (BAS) and sing from the "blue book". The latter is "Common Praise" (1998), which has almost completely replaced the rather unlamented "red book" or, as it was officially known, "The Hymn Book of the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada" (1971). This joint effort, arising in a time when church union was under discussion, found a welcome home in many parishes but certainly not in all. Some bought it only to regret their decision later when they realized that many of the old favourites were left out or had unfamiliar tunes and the newer hymns proved unattractive. Others simply ignored it altogether. One thing is for sure: it never became "the hymn book" its name implies. It seemed to fade away with the failure of the attempt to bring the two churches together.

In 1986 the National Executive Council set up a Hymn Book Task Force to replace the Red Book. This group reported to the 1995 General Synod with a proposed collection of hymns and was authorized to complete the preparation of the book for presentation to the Council of General Synod for permission to publish.

While there are a number of guiding principles in the process, the one that shall concern us here is the desire to provide the Church with hymns that conform to modern sensibilities about the use of inclusive language. The editors have, however, moved far beyond the commonly accepted practice of using inclusive language in reference to human beings. They have altered the language about God himself (herself?)! This has required significant modification of many familiar hymns. In the hymn "Joyful, joyful we adore thee", for example, the line that reads "Thou our Father, Christ our Brother" becomes "Thou(!) our Father and our Mother".

Enormous effort has gone into the attempt to avoid the exclusive "masculinity" of both God the

Father and God the Son. Naturally with such an approach there is a subsequent vagueness when it comes to the Trinity. The more radical changes include the proclamation that God is "Womb of life and source of being" (#390) and "strong mother God" (#395) while another (#392) invites substituting "the great Sophia" for "holy Wisdom". "Sophia" is the Greek word for "wisdom", which the Bible sometimes personifies as female. The major justification for using it as a term for God comes from the apocryphal book entitled Wisdom of Solomon. To use "the great Sophia" as suggested may be questionable also in that many today are promoting the worship of the Greek goddess of the same name.

There is much that could be said here but perhaps it is sufficient to suggest that changing a pronoun or name for God, say from "father" to "parent", significantly changes the meaning. A father is a particular kind of parent, after all. Most Anglicans understand that God is neither male nor female but has chosen to reveal himself in male categories because they best express his character in terms we can understand. A different God emerges when other unbiblical categories (cf. "old aching God" [#392]) and pronouns are used. So many will be uninterested in buying and using a hymn book that contains hymns that they find foreign and even offensive. The fact that many Anglicans no doubt find the traditional/biblical language for God offensive only proves the overall point I am trying to make about our divisions.

It is interesting that the convener of the Task Force that produced "Common Praise" has indicated that "...the (new) hymn book is a collection of diverse voices, which speak in different ways to different people." This worship at the altar of diversity only confirms that our hymnody reflects our fractured reality. Our Church has no way theologically to assess all this diversity: it can only assume that, because a position is advocated by Anglicans, it is a valid expression of the Anglican faith. Certainly, there was no Church-wide consultation, let alone consensus, regarding these innovations.

Theological concerns aside, there is another reason significant numbers of parishes resist the use of "Common Praise". Like its "official" predecessors, Blue Book presents hymns more or less in

the traditional style, some old and some new. In the meantime, much of the Church, mainly from the evangelical/charismatic side, came under the broad influence of the "renewal" movement.

Trans-denominational in scope, this phenomenon has produced a wide variety of music in response to its emphasis on more expressive worship. We find choruses, songs and hymns written in a bewildering variety by a large number of talented authors and musicians and it has become very popular at the grassroots level. Critically, it requires something other than organ to support it and so worship teams have been developed to lead the congregation with piano, keyboard, guitar, trumpet and even drums. While perhaps only a few Anglican parishes have gone this full route, many have taken up this type of music with enthusiasm. Much of it is written in contemporary music styles and in this sense is thus more directly plugged into modern life than the older hymns.

Because renewal music is so broadly based and is in constant state of rapid development, it cannot be contained in any one book. By the nature of the music, any such publication is soon out of date. Perhaps it is true to say that the British compilation, "Mission Praise", has stood the test of time best, containing as it does a good selection of older hymns along with some of the more tested modern efforts.

In this climate it is literally every parish for itself. It has to pick and choose its way through the various offerings. Some parishes buy a copyright license and, using overhead projectors, mix and match from a number of different sources for any particular service (also on the overhead and sometimes also a mix and match from different liturgies). It is quite possible for an Anglican who is reasonably familiar with this kind of music to visit a parish and encounter music which she has never heard before. Fortunately, it is usually catchy and easy to learn. But, by its very nature as a unique mix, it expresses our increasing divisions in yet another way. We are indeed no longer singing from the same hymn book. The old ideal of "common praise" is further away than ever.

On another front, any large organization wanting to ensure that its new members would grasp its purpose and methods would provide them with a vigorous standard program of instruction. In this way they could be shaped and molded to take their place in the overall efficient operation of the enterprise. Without such training the membership would soon have little sense of a common cause or shared goals. Eventually such an organization would find itself falling into chaos and unable, as a result, to function properly.

Recognizing this truth has led many Christian denominations to produce a Sunday School curriculum intended for use in all their congregations. Each member then has a common educative experience which helps create a shared understanding of the Faith and leads to a profound sense of unity, even among a widely scattered flock.

Such was the historical experience of the Anglican Church of Canada. Through its General Board of Religious Education (G.B.R.E.) an extensive Sunday School curriculum was made available to the parishes of the denomination. By all accounts it was almost universally used and made a significant contribution to the sense of being part of the same Church. In some areas teachers from various parishes would even get together on a regular basis in order to prepare themselves for upcoming lessons and work out any problems. Reading it today one is struck, almost amazed, by both its breadth and depth. It is hard to imagine a modern Church providing such a rigorous and thoroughgoing education for its younger members. The teachers' manual for each grade came in a lengthy hardback volume. It is clear that a great deal was expected of both teacher and student. Any child passing through such a system would be well on her way to a good start in the Christian faith.

The difference in the scene today could not be more profound. There is no longer any denominational Sunday School curriculum produced "in house". The Anglican Journal reports that over a third of parishes are using the successor to the ecumenical "Whole People of God" curriculum, the "Seasons of the Spirit"². In fact, it was "adopted by the ACC as its recommended

² "Curriculum Meets Different Needs", Oct. 1, 2009, Nancy Devine

curriculum". According to the article it has had mixed reviews, partly because of its left/liberal slant on social issues. Parishes that pass on it are using a wide variety of other curricula, a number of which originate in the interdenominational evangelical context. In any event, with only a third of our parishes using the recommended curriculum, any sense of unity derived from the use of a common curriculum has long since diminished. And I haven't even mentioned those parishes that DIY!

The change seems to have started with the introduction of the so called "New Curriculum" in the early sixties. This was apparently meant as an update to replace the G.B.R.E. program of previous generations. Unfortunately, the new program was not terribly well received and within a decade it had vanished along with the G.B.R.E. itself. That part of the National Church which is responsible for Christian education has been reduced to a shadow of its former self, almost completely absorbed by a larger committee. Into the vacuum have swept these various contenders for the crown but so far there is no clear winner. Instead, the fragmentation of the denomination as a whole continues through its Sunday Schools, leaving less and less likelihood that they will be able to make any lasting contribution to a common vision.

When we turn to other educational programs beyond the Sunday School the picture becomes even more confused. Here, in the absence of any solid statistical information, one is forced to rely on personal experience and observation and so what follows must be taken with this limitation in mind.

It is true to say that there has been a welcome movement in the denomination towards providing an educational process for those seeking baptism for themselves or their children. This comes out of a renewed understanding of the importance of baptism as the fundamental moment of entry into the Church. The problem is that this "educational process" seems to be different in every parish!

Few dioceses, if any, have a common approach, although it is likely that if proper studies were done certain common patterns would emerge. It is clear, however, that such programs range from the rigorous to the undemanding. One of the minor tensions between clergy is created by the fact that in one parish those seeking baptism might have to attend a course for a number of months and wait until a given Sunday for the service while in the parish next door the rector is willing to baptize more or less "on request" with little or no preparation. However, the trend has certainly been towards more rather than less baptismal preparation.

Regardless of the method or form of instruction there remains the question of its content. Here we have an even bigger question mark. The truth is that no one knows what baptismal candidates in the Anglican Church of Canada are being taught about the faith. This is usually, if not always, left up to the individual rector and reflects his or her understanding and emphasis. Given the wide divergences here, it is safe to assume that this diversity is reflected in the entry level educational process, whatever its form.

Confirmation preparation presents a similar scenario. In days gone by it was understood that one had to memorize the Catechism in order to be confirmed. On page 544 of the Book of Common Prayer we are told in capital letters that this Instruction is "to be learned by every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop". This is now largely ignored. Certainly, it would shock most candidates to be asked by a bishop even to recite the Apostle's Creed! What is being done instead? Who knows? Most rectors make a conscientious effort to prepare their candidates as best they can along whatever lines they think necessary but there is little commonality observable. They are on their own.

To make matters even more complicated and to once again show how divided the denomination really is, it is necessary to observe that there is a vigorous internal debate going on about the very nature and place of Confirmation in the modern church. It used to be that one had to be confirmed in order to receive Holy Communion. However, the renewed emphasis on baptism as

the full initiation rite has led to the communication not only of unconfirmed children but even of infants in some parishes. This has obviously removed a major reason for being Confirmed.

Many continue to see Confirmation to be valid as an opportunity for a person to take on his or her baptismal vows in a personal way and this has helped open the question about the proper age at which it should be undertaken. Oddly, this has resulted in one side saying it really is for children when they reach "the age of accountability" (perhaps as young as six or seven but always variable with each child), while another would have it delayed until one's basic calling in life has been chosen, seeing it more as a vocational ordination (perhaps as old as twenty-five or so depending again on the individual circumstances). Still others wish to retain the traditional age of around thirteen! At least one diocese, in response to all this, announced its intention to suspend confirmations altogether! To say the contemporary Church does not enjoy a common mind on this once-settled topic is to engage in serious understatement. Again, our fragmentation is evident.

Another area of educational disarray is marriage preparation. Again, on the one hand it is a huge step forward to provide this an age where marriage is seen as optional for couples living together and divorce is so common, but there is no common way that it is being done. Like baptism and confirmation, marriage preparation is largely left in the hands of individual rectors to do their own thing. In some locations there can be a significant amount of sharing this through a course or program offered more widely, should the rector wish to make use of it. But it is up to her or him to do so.

This is especially a matter of concern because baptism, confirmation, and marriage represent opportunities to evangelize our own membership and those who are on the periphery. It is at these points that we have an audience made up of many who are unchurched. However, our track record with all these efforts demonstrates they have been largely a failure from this perspective.

When one turns to the issue of Anglican adult Christian education things get murkier yet, if possible. The unfortunate pattern has been to treat Confirmation as kind of a graduation exercise after which there was no particular expectation or provision for continuing education. It is almost unheard of, for example, for an Anglican parish to have an adult Sunday School class. It may surprise many Anglicans to discover that this is routine in many other denominations.

Many parishes try to fill the gap by promoting the practice of daily devotions through the use of material provided by Scripture Union or Forward Movement. Others have a Bible Study group, usually led by the rector for a faithful few. In addition, groups come together on an occasional basis (often in Lent) to study particular issues. Some bring in a lecturer or a missionary from time to time as well. The best that many can seem to offer a small library or a book/pamphlet rack at the back of the church.

But as far as a systematic approach to adult continuing Christian education is concerned, it is largely non-existent. Again, where it does exist, there is not only a variety of forms, there is a variety of content. The picture is truly bewildering.

Bewildering. That would be the word for this whole scene. Unless one wanted to use "confusing", "chaotic", "inconsistent", "fragmented", "complicated" or at best, "variegated", "diverse" or even "flexible". Whichever word one chooses, none can bear the weight of unity. To the extent that one might hope for a sense of the latter to come through or be encouraged by the life of the local Church, one is clearly in for a serious disappointment. If anything, the opposite is probably true.

Our educational scene is undoubtedly a clear reflection of the division that is characteristic of the whole denomination. Even worse, in turning our backs on the denominational Sunday School curriculum and the teaching of the Catechism we have abandoned the two common denominators that we did have in this area. All this when we lack a truly common liturgy or praise. Any of these, like so much of our past, seems beyond imagining, let alone beyond recovering.

It is difficult to remember that not that long ago Anglican congregations were worshipping with the same liturgy, singing from the same hymn book, listening to the same anthems, reading the same portions of Scripture and having their children taught from the same lessons. Picture, if you can, the common bond this shared experience could create between complete strangers coming together for wider Church meetings. While there would certainly be differences of opinion they would nevertheless share a common outlook, and this would greatly enable them to work together.

Modern Anglican worship reality is much more diverse: the "smells and bells" of a Prayer Book anglo-catholic celebration of high mass, the sweetgrass smoke of a native circle, the raised hands of boisterous charismatics praising Jesus and using the BAS on an overhead projector and the relaxed informality of an evangelical congregation with a do-it yourself liturgy. Each of these services employ different hymn-books and use different musical accompaniment from pipe organ to small band to guitar to native drums.

While diversity is often seen as an undefined blessing, what would complete strangers coming from such radically diverse parish environments have in common? Ask them to work together on a wider church basis and see what happens. What happens is reflective of the wider crisis in the Church. It is no mystery.

Now it can be argued that the diversity within the Anglican Church of Canada is no more than that which the church has always experienced. After all, the Christians gathered for the great council at Nicea in 325 A.D. looked and sounded a lot different from those gathered at the great missionary congress at Exeter Hall, London in 1840. This is true. The Gospel has adapted itself to hundreds, perhaps thousands of different cultures. But it is also true that no one tried to put all these different expressions of Christianity into the same organizational body and expect them to function well together! Difficult as such a challenge would have been in the past, it pales beside the one facing the ACC.

If it were only a matter of "different expressions" of the one faith, as at Nicea and at London, there might be some hope of eventually discovering common ground in the essential truths of that faith. In other words, one could theoretically distinguish between form and content, between outward appearance and inward reality. However, as the next chapter will demonstrate, much of the diversity in the Anglican Church can be traced to the fact that the "common ground in the essentials of the faith" is simply no longer present in the institution. This threatens to make any effort to discover an underlying unity an exercise in futility.

Symptom 5: A Complex Superiority

In a healthy organization the leadership is ever attentive to the needs and desires of its membership. This is a basic rule. Violate it and you are in big trouble. Because of it we find politicians poring over the latest poll results with great care and paying vast sums to those who can devise and interpret them. Another critical leadership function is to be able to communicate vision and direction for the organization in such a way that it gathers the enthusiastic support of the membership. The latter must feel an important part of the whole enterprise by being consulted, informed and empowered.

From this perspective as well there are many signs that the Anglican Church of Canada is indeed in big trouble. A large gap has opened up between the person in the pew and the clergy elite who provide the leadership. The Christian church, in almost all of its manifestations, has struggled with "clericalism", the dominance of the clergy. This is nothing new. But in the Anglican Church it appears to be especially virulent, making a very real contribution to the present crisis.

Speaking as an insider on this issue I can testify that, at our worst moments, many clergy seem convinced that only what we do and what we are concerned about have true significance in the life of the Church. Indeed, this is what we often mean when we talk about what "is going on in the Church". The rank and file membership often appear merely as a backdrop to the real drama.

This, I would reiterate, is at our worst moments! But they are real ones, human ones, that often result in our seeing things from a very narrow career-oriented perspective.

As a newly ordained clergy person I was soon initiated into this way of thinking by listening to a conversation among a number of more senior clergy about a colleague who had once again found himself unable to function in a parish due to his own incompetence. The discussion centred solely around the need to find him another parish so that he could continue to have an income and a career. Almost no sympathy was expressed for the poor parishioners either of his last parish or the future one where he would undoubtedly wreak the same havoc again. The thought of turfing him out on his ear was simply considered unchristian.

There is some truth to this, of course. But surely it is even more unchristian to entrust the cure of souls to an incompetent priest. It is very easy to fall into this mindset as a clergy person because it is obviously in your own self-interest to do so: once you are in the club you have a high degree of job security. I am ashamed to say that I am as guilty as anyone of finding comfort in this view. But is the perspective of an elite.

Elitism is about power. Who has it and who keeps it. The clergy elite in the Anglican Church is exceptionally powerful. The numbers help tell the story. Back in 1961, when the Church was at its greatest numerical strength of 1,320,000 it was served by 1,711 parish clergy. By 1994 membership had dropped almost in half to 780,000, but the number of clergy had only dropped to 1,622. While it would be unfair to attribute this remarkable fact solely to the power of the clergy-elite it does suggest that they have been able to maintain their numbers in the face of obvious economic pressure. When one considers that the average stipend and benefits package has increased dramatically over the same period the accomplishment is all the more impressive.

But it is not just about numbers. It is about influence and direction. The clergy, as the authorized leadership in the church, have always enjoyed (and deserved) a certain amount of respect and even veneration. The title of "Reverend" is a natural reflection of this truth. In those branches of

the church, like Anglicanism, that retain a more Catholic order this tendency towards veneration seems to be more marked than in those following a congregational model. The high regard for the clergy in all Christian Churches is fundamentally a reflection of both the biblical pattern and the natural human need for hierarchical leadership. It is not wrong, but it does have its dangers.

In Anglicanism this tendency to put the clergy on a pedestal was heightened by the Catholic revival of the last century. At that time the term "Father", as a proper title for the priest, was brought back into the Church from pre-Reformation days. At its best this title highlights both the responsibilities of anyone entrusted to the care of Christ's flock and the honour due to this office. It also serves as a reminder that that, ideally, the church is a family presided over by a benevolent Father who has their best interests at heart.

However, the use of "Father" and, nowadays, "Mother", can also amplify an attitude that tends to keep the "children" in ignorance and dependence. This is all too common a feature of Anglican Church life, even among those who avoid the use of Father as a title. It is marked by an almost complete lack of serious effort toward the religious education of the laity. Sermons have become "homilies" and clergy even boast about how short they can make them! From one perspective, at least, this is an indication that lay people have no real need to be educated or knowledgeable in matters of the faith.

We need to realize, however, that knowledge is power. The less knowledgeable are subject to manipulation by the knowledgeable. It is a dangerous situation for both sides: one is tempted to control and the other to abdicate responsibility. Both are only human. While there is no evidence that the maintenance of a theologically and biblically uninformed laity has resulted from any conscious effort, it is a reality nevertheless. A sad reality.

There is also an obvious cleavage between the leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada and its membership in the arena of public life, of politics, economics and social policy. There was a time when the ACC could have been said to be the Conservative Party at prayer. While that is still

generally true of the rank and file, the clergy-elite has taken a serious veer to the left, taking positions on issue after issue that are virtually indistinguishable from those of the socialist New Democratic Party and the dictates of political correctness.

This has contributed substantially to the alienation that many members have towards their Church. They have been astounded as leaders of a religious body who have little experience of the business world have poured invective on capitalism. After all, this is the system in which these members made their living and is the only one which has lifted millions out of poverty in spite of its many shortcomings. When they even saw their Church's leaders being decidedly friendly towards the totalitarian regimes of world communism like Cuba, and other leftist regimes, they could only shake their heads in bewilderment.

Furthermore, Church leaders consistently identified leftist analysis and solutions as self-evidently more Christian than any other. One could not be in true solidarity with the poor unless one adopted a socialist solution to their plight. Hard work and personal responsibility became unmentionable qualities for those convinced that the only valid solutions had to deal with systemic problems and that usually required government intervention. Meanwhile the people in the pew were forced to deal with their own reality and found themselves pushed further and further away from their leaders.

Sociologist Reginald Bibby, in his 1986 study of the Diocese of Toronto entitled "Anglitrends", reported (p. 11) that ordinary Anglicans were only half as likely to support the socialist NDP than were the rest of the population! Eighty-one percent voted either Conservative (56%) or Liberal (25%). The gap between leaders and members in this area may have widened even further in today's acrimonious climate of cultural warfare. However, it may also be that those who have become Anglicans in the last thirty years have done so because they were attracted by the political views of the leadership of the Church. Only another similar study would tell us which is true.

One undoubted characteristic of elitism is that initiatives for change originate at the top of the organization rather than at the bottom. It is difficult to imagine an institution that better fits this pattern than the Anglican Church of Canada. With few exceptions one is hard-pressed to name any recent change that has developed at the insistence of those at the grassroots. In fact, in most instances, but not all, the changes have met with at least bewilderment if not outright resistance from this level.

The classic example of this is the process which led to the introduction of the Book of Alternative Services. There was no discernible push for modern liturgies from the person in the pew. No petitions were circulated among parishioners calling for major revisions to the Book of Common Prayer. Whatever the merits of the proposed new liturgy, from beginning to end its introduction was an initiative "from above". Church leaders had been educated in the theories of the liturgical renewal movement of the 1960's and also saw a clear need to move away from the BCP for theological reasons (see next Chapter).

Certainly, a concerted effort was made to obtain input and feedback from as wide a range of Anglicans as possible but many who participated in the process felt that they were nevertheless ignored. The evangelical community, for example, submitted weighty critiques of the proposed Eucharistic Prayers but to no avail. The leadership of the Church was fully aware that these Anglicans has serious objections and yet the Book was published anyway.³

This is the behaviour of an elite. It assumes that it has the proper perspective from which the good of all can be pursued. Surrounded by the like-minded and having discounted other possibilities as outmoded or even dangerous, such groups show a marked tendency to filter out those things that do not fit into their agenda. This behaviour is largely unconscious and is almost certainly unintended. This, however, does not make the pain it inflicts any less real, as anyone who read the "Letters to the Editor" section of the Anglican Journal during this period can testify.

³ It should be noted that a belated partial response did eventually come in the form of a Supplementary Eucharistic Prayer as noted on page 22, above.

But even worse was to come when the BAS was finally issued and introduced into parishes. The official line, which was followed by many, held that the BAS was only an alternative to the BCP. Nevertheless, in diocese after diocese there was pressure from above, often not at all subtle, to introduce and use this book in spite of the wishes of the rector or the people. In many other parishes, rectors eager for change assigned the BCP to the early Communion while the main service was exclusively BAS (and exclusively Holy Communion, but that is another [similar] story). In at least one diocese the bishop had to point out to his clergy that this was not an acceptable interpretation of "alternative"! Diocesan services often became exclusively BAS.

These impositions caused much unrest and even heartache as the beloved BCP began to disappear from use. Many, perhaps even thousands, have left the church or have become inactive because of this one issue. Within a year of the BAS's debut, Reginald Bibby reported in *Anglitrends* that 31% of less active Anglicans cited changes in styles of worship as a key factor in their alienation (p. 94). This is not to imply that the BAS was always and everywhere introduced with insensitivity or rejected with vehemence. However there does appear to have been a widespread pattern of the clergy-elite going in one direction and the people going along reluctantly at best.

The overall sense of angst among the laity resulting from all these developments is best said by a published report from one of the delegates to a General Synod in the late '90's. I think it still captures the mood of many, many ordinary Anglicans. The author has been involved at the highest levels of administration in her own diocese and is as knowledgeable as anyone about what is really going on in the Church. She was struck by the faith and commitment of the members of Synod and that one could "...easily come away with a glowing feeling that as Anglicans we have it all right...". But that was not the reality as she soon discovered:

Each day during meal times and afterhour gatherings, I met and spoke with Anglicans from big cities, farming communities, northern company towns, native reserves, and small town

Canada. When we got past the initial chatty exchanges, inevitably the story was the same. Smaller congregations, shrinking budgets, the absence of young people, burn out - not only of the clergy but overworked lay volunteers, loss of spirit, and, in general, all the signs of a real crisis. (INCOURAGE, October 1995, p. 2)

Most involved Anglicans know very well that their Church is in a serious crisis. It is not only the subject of the table-talk at General Synod but wherever two or three Anglicans are gathered together for conversation, there it is in the midst of them! It is the reality in which we live and move and have our being.

In the first edition of this work, written twenty years ago, I went to great lengths to show that the leaders of our Church, especially at the national level, were in denial about what was happening. Thankfully, this is no longer true. The decline in membership, at least, has been devastating and obvious to all. This is in spite of the fact that no national statistics have been made available now for eleven years. One wonders if they have been just too alarming or depressing to publish!⁴

While there has been no co-ordinated national effort to reverse the trend, a great deal of effort has gone into at least managing the decline as best as possible at the diocesan level. This is to be commended, in spite of the pain it has caused. It is far better to have a plan about how to do the downsizing and rationalizing of ministry resources than to not have a plan at all.

The Diocese of British Columbia may be the canary in the mine for the rest of us. This diocese, which encompasses Vancouver Island and is headquartered in Victoria, has been hit particularly hard by membership loss. This is perhaps partly because the region was more “British” than the rest of Canada and thus had relatively more Anglican churches in relationship to the overall population. Just over half a century ago forty percent of the population was Anglican and now it

⁴ The official reason is that the methods of collecting the data are unreliable. However, parishes continue to fill out and submit them as required.

is about 1.2 percent! Of course, the population of the area has grown considerably at the same time but not including enough committed Anglicans to avoid serious decline.

A diocesan report called for the closure of 19 out of its 54 churches and pointed out the precarious condition of another 13. To its credit the diocese has started the painful process of downsizing and some of the churches are to be part of reconstituted “hub” churches. It has been agreed that about 7 of the 19 will indeed be closed down entirely. Although diocesan leaders insist that all this is to facilitate ministry in a new era, many see it as driven by the obvious decline in numbers and shrinking diocesan and parish budgets. Time will tell if these and other initiatives will turn the tide.

It is highly likely that this is the form of response that will be typical across the country as more and more dioceses come to terms with the new reality. In the short term, at least, there is little option. In my area, twenty years ago the city of Saint John, New Brunswick, had 12 churches, each with a full-time rector. Now, there are just four full-time rectors, seven churches, one unusable church, and one mission. Part-time and bi-vocational priests are fast becoming the norm while diocesan structures and expectations struggle to keep up. Parishes have been closed and amalgamated with others where possible, churches sold or torn down and many people upset.

As one might easily surmise, the impact of this crisis has fallen heavily upon our clergy. Not having a solution to the situation, the leadership is at least attempting to develop a strategy for survival. The typical clergy conference brings in an expert of some sort who makes it clear to the clergy that the coming major decline in church membership will impact severely upon their careers. Now that the tsunami of decline has finally arrived at each of our doorsteps, the profession is undergoing a severe testing, resulting in much stress.

The Church of the future will obviously have less full-time clergy because it will only be about half the present size. In fact, the clergy are being encouraged to take a second job and thus become

"bi-vocational". The expectation is that many will only be able to have a part-time position in the Church and will need that second job if they hope to pull in an adequate income. Furthermore, greater emphasis will be placed on the role of non-stipendiary clergy. This is a very hard message for the current clergy community to hear. To have to think about a second "vocation" in mid-career is extremely traumatic to those used to a high degree of job security and whose skills are not as portable as some others.

Beyond even this it is becoming all too clear that the nature of the job itself, even for those few who might remain in full-time positions, will have to change significantly. The current crop of clergy received its calling and training within the old system and has learned to function within its various structures and expectations. Basically, clergy were seen as the persons in the Church who did "the ministry". They are now discovering that they are to become those who train the laity for ministry and this is not necessarily welcome news. At the very least it raises questions about their own calling and their ability to take on new tasks for which they may have neither appropriate gifts nor training.

All this is to say that the reality of the crisis is beginning to take its toll within the clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada. Being on the frontlines, they know very well that the Church is in serious trouble and that they are going to take their share of the inevitable difficulties ahead. Discontentment has become one of the burdens of office. Younger clergy wonder if there will be a place for them at all while older clergy find themselves unattractive to parishes desperate to attract younger people back to church. What was formerly a pastoral relationship between the bishop and his clergy is descending into the vortex of employee - employer relationships including the inevitable involvement of lawsuits and lawyers.

When we add to this the long list of problems already facing the profession as a whole, the sense of crisis increases almost to the breaking point. A catalogue of these would include marriage breakdown, underpayment, a perceived loss of power vis a vis the bishops, lack of collegiality, multiplication of meetings, little measurable career success, loss of prestige in the community,

an unresponsive bureaucracy, unending conflict, an uncertain message, workaholism, too many hours, changed role expectations, lack of supervision or accountability, inadequate training, unending parish and diocesan budget pressures, and, finally...burnout. The continuing difficulties of the Church in dealing with incompetence or in restoring those who require rehabilitation only completes the disturbing picture.

None of this is imply that Anglican clergy are worse off than many other professionals or that there are no compensating factors which can make their calling rich and rewarding. However, it is very difficult to imagine a group of "employees" more dissatisfied with their current job experience than the clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada. Here I speak from the inside, as one who has been to many clergy conferences, engaged in countless conversations and observed the situation first hand. It is thoroughly demoralizing. Conditions are well into the danger zone. Ask the bishops! They are so busy trying to put out the "fires" resulting from all this stress that they have almost no time for their traditional role of chief pastor and teacher.

Conclusion: Somebody Call a Doctor!

So much for the symptoms. Clearly, we are seriously ill. It is also clear that we are beginning to live with our sickness, adjusting our activities to those we can still perform. But what is the disease with which we are afflicted? Can it be cured? Is it fatal?

It is true that some of the decline of the ACC is due to the enormous changes that have taken place in our society. As in most of the "Christian" world, Canada has become secularized and religion has lost ground across the board. But while many denominations have suffered decline, some have not. For example, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada report a slight increase in attendance from 2015-2016 and holding its own over the last few years. It is also a fact that a few Anglican parishes are thriving against all odds. Why is this so?

The fact that not all Christian denominations are in such radical decline suggests that the rampant secularism of our society cannot explain our losses of membership by itself. There must be another reason or reasons for this disaster that help explain our situation and perhaps point the way to recovery.

And, therefore, we must dig deeper in order to discover the real reasons for our particular decline.