

Some Reasons Little Trinity Can Feel at Home in the Diocese of Toronto

by the Rev'd Canon Christopher King

Some dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada – but not the Diocese of Toronto - have voted in favour of the blessing of same sex unions. In the context of our property renewal decision this question has arisen. If the Diocese of Toronto approved the blessing of same-sex unions and if the Little Trinity congregation chose to leave the diocese, who would own our buildings and land?

The more important question, I believe, is: What is God calling Little Trinity to be and do for homosexual men and women? My vision for Little Trinity is that we will be a refuge for homosexual men and women who hear God's call to live celibate lives and need an accepting and loving church community to sustain them in this challenging call. We must be a church in which our youth feel safe to be honest about their developing sexuality, at least within our youth programme. In sexuality and all matters, Little Trinity will be a church that desires personal transformation for everyone, as we grow together into the likeness of Christ. I hope that we will be a community that witnesses to the truth that God's restrictions on human behaviour lead to life, and life in abundance.

What if the national church and diocese permit same-sex blessings? I have presented a detailed biblical case for remaining with the Anglican Church of Canada, as you may know from my earlier paper, *'Why stay within an Anglican Church that allows same-sex blessings'* (available from Little Trinity's web-site or the church office). At the diocesan level, we will continue to be active in the debate about the blessing of same sex unions. Thankfully, it is apparent that this matter is not at the top of our bishops' agenda. Church planting and evangelism are at the front of their minds as the establishment of annual church planting conferences testifies. (I have attended the first two and so did the bishops.) Nevertheless, I predict that the Diocese of Toronto Synod will eventually approve the blessing of same sex unions in certain authorized churches that request permission to do so. Little Trinity Church will not be one of those parishes and will not be asked or expected to bless same sex unions. In those dioceses most hostile to evangelicals, no church has been required to bless same-sex unions.

So, Little Trinity sits in a diocese under an evangelical area bishop (Bishop Patrick Yu) and a college of bishops focused on church planting and growth through evangelism. This could change but not in the foreseeable future. The fact that Toronto has a 'college' of five bishops elected at different times means that it is extremely difficult for a radical liberal bishop to be elected and change everything. The recent election by hundreds of clergy and laity of two area bishops (Bishops Yu and Nicholls) whose background is evangelical indicates that the Toronto diocesan community wants evangelicals to be active and influential in the diocese.

Even a cursory study of church history shows us that God sorts things out at a slower pace than we would choose. Jesus Christ cannot be defeated; any setbacks

that we endure are merely temporary. Martin Luther, who did not choose to leave the Roman Catholic Church, must find it very satisfying that that Church, the church that kicked him out, has adopted many of his ideas. John Wesley, who never left the Church of England, must be delighted at the way Alpha and now church planting has swept across the nation and given the Church of England a mission shaped agenda.);

The biblical model for personal and community change is to receive and be changed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Conversion is the work of God but requires human agency. My vision for Little Trinity is that we will work with growing passion for the ongoing conversion of our own lives in submission to Christ, and the conversion of the church and of this city. Our agenda is to share the love, truth and power of Jesus Christ with our friends and strangers so that they and we may be transformed and the Kingdom of God revealed.

I am convinced that the single most important agency for the renewal of the Anglican Church of Canada is Wycliffe College that trains, sends out and increasingly supports evangelical clergy. The most effective strategies for the renewal of the Anglican Church are prayer and the encouragement of evangelicals leading parishes, most of which will gladly receive the ministry of an evangelical who can help them grow. I am so thankful that the Lord continues to call members of Little Trinity to Wycliffe and to ordained ministry.

If Little Trinity stays with the diocese of Toronto, as I believe we must, the question regarding who owns our land is moot. The question of our stewardship of the land and some buildings is not moot; they do not fulfill their potential to serve the kingdom well now but they could if we engage in their transformation. Every time the people of God risk themselves and their money for God, we do so for a future that is unknowable. Anything can open. We must do what we can to serve and glorify God now, trusting that God will take care of his church and his people in the future.