



## 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

*Steve Schuh*

Friends and members of Integrity Vancouver gathered at Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver on April 23rd to celebrate our 25th anniversary! About 120 people attended the service and reception, celebrated by Bishop Michael Ingham.

The theme for the event was, "To What Do You Call Us Now?" In his sermon the Rev. Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Director of the Indigenous Studies Program at VST, recounted some of the progress for gay and lesbian people in the church and called us to continue to be sensitive to the Spirit and the needs of others as we discern God's purpose for our future. [Fill out the enclosed survey page to help us in that task!]

Some people found the Prayers of the People particularly moving as they included many spoken requests for areas in the world where gay and lesbian people continue to be excluded or discriminated against, both by the church and society. The names of many Integrity friends were also remembered, including one of our founders, Bill Wood, who died since our last large anniversary celebration in 2000.

Following Bishop Michael's remarks during the reception, several past Integrity presidents reflected

on both the high and low points of the last twenty-five years. John Fitzgerald recounted the struggle just to get going, and others noted our first chaplain, the first table at a diocesan synod, various Pride Parades, and our continuing work for full inclusion in our Church, locally, nationally, and in the worldwide Communion.

Integrity also received a very gracious gift from friends in Dignity, our Roman Catholic counterpart, as we shared together our common struggle, since both groups started in the late 1970's.

Many members also found the archival material interesting. Almost every newsletter of the past seventeen years has been preserved, as well as newspaper clippings, photos, videos, and correspondence documenting Integrity's ministry since 1980.

Integrity's 25th Anniversary was a big event, and we're very grateful for all those who helped to make it happen, including: Bishop Michael and Martin Brokenleg; our chaplain, Bob Korth, and Celia Howard for the liturgy; music director Paul Bunnell; Michael

Kalmuk for organizing the reception; Dean Peter and the staff of the Cathedral who volunteered so much time; for past presidents Don Meen, Vivien Warr, Mayne Ellis, Kelly Montfort, Dennis Lou-Hing, John FitzGerald, and Gareth Llewellyn who spiced up our remembering; Clarence and Tony for keeping things running smoothly; and for all our members and friends who contributed to a beautiful day. Thank you!



## ON THE BEARING OF BURDENS

*Steve Schuh, President*

In their retirement years my parents are doing hard labour. After forty-two years in a paper mill my dad was ready for some space, so they traded-in the house for an RV and now enjoy summers on a lake in cabin country and winters in the South – this year it was Arizona and Texas.

Between idyllic vacation spots, however, they volunteer with an organization that supplies free labour to churches and Christian camps for building projects. Spending several months a year on construction sites, they've met dozens of RVing friends who revel in the satisfaction of "building the Kingdom of God" in a very hands-on way!

That is, until this year. An assignment in southern Texas turned maddening when the clergy person overseeing the project changed his mind about the job every other day. As often as not, the volunteers found themselves deconstructing work they had only completed the day before. As weeks went by with little progress, my dad – always one for a smart comment – confided privately, "I don't mind working for free, but I won't work for nothing." As soon as their allotted time was completed they hit the road for home.

### **Bear any burden**

It's sometimes surprising to see the burdens some people will bear for something (or someone) they believe in. At Integrity's 25th Anniversary celebration last month we saw just that as past presidents retold stories of the struggle, determination, and hard work of gay and lesbian Anglicans and our allies who are helping to build a more inclusive Church.

And a more inclusive Church is being built! It's already seven years since this diocese became the first in Canada to vote to celebrate and support committed same-sex relationships, and later this month our own Kelly and Michael will mark the second anniversary of their blessing service (on top of their previous twenty-one years)!

Our national Church is moving forward, too, voting last year to "affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed, adult, same-sex relationships."

Of course there is more work yet to do – more study, more dialogue, more newsletters, more testimonies, more light yet to shine – but the Kingdom of God is on the rise, and lesbian and gay people are in the middle of it!

### **Support any friend**

But we also recognize that some who labour beside us in the Kingdom are not altogether certain that this project is developing as it ought. I remember that two-thirds of the diocesan synod delegates who voted against same-sex blessings in 2002 did NOT leave the room. Though they now find themselves in a minority position on this issue, most of them have found sufficient common cause with us to remain in relationship.

I think it good and right, then, for us to be sensitive to these sisters and brothers in Christ, people for whom our inclusion continues to be challenging. I have several friends (and family members) who are still struggling through these issues, and I am willing to bear significant burdens to "create space" in which our friendships can grow, and we can try to work things out together. That's what committed relationships are about.

So when friends in this shared church-building activity ask us to stop for a moment, to stop work on a project that they're not yet ready to commit themselves to wholeheartedly, then I think we need to honour them, listen to what they have to say, and come to a decision as to how we will proceed together.

### **The burden of moratorium**

The Diocese of New Westminster is unique in that we are the only church body in the Canadian Church of whom the Primates' request for a moratorium on same-sex blessings requires significant sacrifice. Even the proposal to limit – for a specified period of time – the number of parishes authorized to use the rite of blessing comes with a price. How so?

First, many gay and lesbian people do not attend one of the seven authorized parishes, and it is not clear what provision exists for their appropriate pastoral care if their own parishes are limited by a moratorium. Can a same-sex couple rent the church building of an authorized parish and invite their own priest and parish to attend? We need to know what is being asked of

lesbian and gay couples and their supportive (but unauthorized) faith communities under a limited moratorium.

Second, and of wider import, I think, even a limited moratorium sends an altogether negative message to lesbian and gay people and their allies, churched and unchurched. No matter how we spin it, the media will report – as they did following the House of Bishop's statement in late April – that the Anglican Church is backing down on same-sex unions, that the Church is waffling in its welcome of GLBT people. Such a move will add insult to centuries of injury. It'll be painful. The Church's credibility – and that of the gospel – will take a hit.

So, there is a significant burden to bear should a moratorium be imposed, and it is once again the gay community that is being asked to shoulder it, largely unaided.

But the question remains: Is this a burden we are willing to bear for some higher purpose, for the sake of important relationships?

### **Bearing one another's burdens**

In my view the most persuasive argument for a limited moratorium comes from those conservative friends in this diocese who say that the proposed moratorium is meaningful for them. I want to know more about that, but in itself it's enough to make me listen to what their needs might be, to try to understand where they're hurting.

Sadly I do not feel similarly about some of the international voices currently demanding repentance on our part, a full change of mind and heart under threat of schism. They may talk of dialogue and publicly decry discrimination, but their actions speak so much louder than their hypocritical words. Their power-tripping "moral imperialism" doesn't sound like the gospel to me. What kind of relationship is supposed to be cultivated by that?

The relationships I'd be more willing to sacrifice for are closer to home, with people who have demonstrated their commitment to sticking this out with us. I need to hear more about what a moratorium would do for them, but I'd go a long way to "create space" for these friendships to grow.

But if we "create space" and nothing more, we've only created a vacuum. We also need to create

something constructive in this space, to put ourselves to work side by side, intentionally cultivating our relationships as we labour together in our church-building. No doubt there'll be plenty of fear and trembling, but we'll be working out our salvation together.

In this kind of work gay and lesbian Anglicans have demonstrated an amazing capacity for bearing one another's burdens, and we're willing to do it for free. But don't make us work for nothing. Let's make the coming years productive – for our relationships in the Body of Christ and for the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

## **RELINQUISHING THE ILLUSION OF CHURCH UNITY**

*Don Meen*

I was interested to read Reginald Stackhouse's op-ed piece recently in the Globe and Mail titled "Protestants should love this Pope." Stackhouse is principal emeritus of Wycliffe College, an evangelical Anglican college in the East. My interest extended beyond his point of view about the relationship of Protestants and Roman Catholics under Benedict XVI because I thought I heard something relevant to our intra-Anglican disagreement about the rightful place of gays and lesbians in the life of the Church, specifically our suitability for ordination and the blessing of our committed relationships.

Stackhouse says we are now "liberated from a futile search for a pan-Christendom kind of church." Why would he say that we are now so liberated? Because Benedict's "election brings a healthy injection of realism to Christianity. It means the end of illusions ...of us all coming together under something as illusory as a kind of Pope the world has never known." Benedict's pronouncements as Cardinal Ratzinger make it clear that coming together is impossible and even undesirable because it would require the capitulation of those who disagree with him on many matters of conscience.

Sound relevant to our current Anglican dilemma?

Those who affirm the full participation of gay and lesbian Anglicans in the life of the Church, including recognizing the presence and activity of God in our committed relationships of love must, according to the most vociferous leaders of the anti-gay contingent in the worldwide Church, "repent," i.e. capitulate on our

convictions of conscience, or they will kick us out. Hear what the Primate of Nigeria has to say: "... the underlying issue is not a temporary cessation of these practices but a decision to renounce them and demonstrate a willing embrace of the same teaching on matters of sexual morality as is generally accepted throughout the Communion..."

What is so helpful about this is its clarity. We're out unless and until we change our view to agree with that of the anti-gay contingent, as large as it may well be. So this leads me to ask about the proposal that our diocese institute some form of moratorium on the blessing of same-gender unions. What is the purpose of a moratorium? What does it allow or encourage that is good, that we should institute one?

Stackhouse doesn't end his op-ed piece gloomily and nor will I. He says we can recognize that non-Catholics often and on important questions won't agree with this new Roman Catholic Pope and that, rather than wasting energy on an illusion of Church unity, we can focus ourselves on what we can do together with real effect – like tackling poverty. So I say, as far as this Anglican Communion is concerned, let's recognize that we won't agree around the world on the place of gays and lesbians in the Church. Let's not strive for a unity, defined as uniformity, which is not possible without some having to violate their conscience. Let us stand by what we have discerned over many years of talking, praying and studying together: that we have been Spirit-led to affirm the full humanity of gay and lesbian people and we will express that in our common worship life. No voluntarily absenting ourselves from the Anglican Consultative Council, no moratorium on blessings of same-gender unions will bring about unity, because there is no will on the anti-gay side to do the work of listening, praying and studying together, nor to live

with the ambiguity of different faith communities within the Church having heard the Gospel's call differently. Can we instead focus our considerable energy on what we agree upon – the elimination of poverty, perhaps?

## RECOVERING BOTH/AND

*Rev. Dr. Richard Leggatt*

The Response to the Windsor Report drafted by John Oakes and me has recommended a moratorium on the authorization of any further parishes as communities in which the blessing of same-gender unions may occur. This is a recognition that the Diocese cannot simply ignore the request of the Windsor Report nor can we turn back the clock. What we are recommending is that we pause as we await the recommendation of the Primate's Theological Commission and the actions of General Synod 2007. We will be demonstrating a degree of restraint without sacrificing the availability of such blessings to those couples who wish them. No doubt this recommendation will not satisfy all those who believe such blessings to be wrong nor all those who believe such blessings to be right. 'Either/or' thinking, however, will not help us mend the breaches that have been opened before us nor does it recognize the diversity of catholic teaching and practice. If we are able to recover a 'both/and' approach to this question, then we may find our way forward together. This requires mutual restraint and that is what we are advocating.

## MOVING GOD'S WORK FORWARD

*Rev. Bob Korth*

As we prepare for Synod, and yet another round in the seemingly endless discussions on the blessing of same-sex unions, perhaps it would be wise to remind ourselves what is at stake in our deliberations. Consider the beginning to the litany of blessing found in our authorized Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Covenants:

*Dear friends, N. and N. have been drawn by God into a covenant of mind and body, heart and will. We have celebrated this covenant and pray that the life they share will reflect the love of God for the whole world.*

We meet for worship and fellowship on the first Sunday of every month at

St. Paul's Anglican Church (West End)  
1130 Jervis Street  
Vancouver, BC  
at 7 pm

*Let us join in prayer asking God's blessing upon us as we go forth with N. and N. to proclaim with our lives the reconciling and renewing love of God made known in Jesus Christ.*

What we are promoting is the complete normalization of homosexuality. Persons who are oriented sexually to other persons of their own gender have been created that way by God. Moreover, God rejoices with such persons when they enter into a covenanted relationship in which their love for and delight in each other is expressed sexually. In fact, God has brought them together just for this purpose. This love for and delight in each other reflects, mirrors, and is a sign of, God's unconditional love for and delight in all that she has created.

It is probably prudent to point out here that – as difficult as it may be for some of us to believe – not all gay and lesbian persons are perfect. There is abuse, perversion, and downright nastiness present in the gay community. I think it is fair to say that this community is not the only community in which such behavior occurs. We are all sinners. However, neither homosexuality itself, nor its loving expression within a covenanted union, is, or ever has been, a sin.

Surprisingly to many of us, this is not always a widely-held view. That is why we have been so careful in this diocese to insist that people must not be required to act against their conscience in this matter. Our bishop has surrounded the use of the rite for the blessing same-sex unions with numerous regulations designed to protect Christians who cannot or do not accept the position I have been describing. He has gone so far as to offer what is now known as "Shared Episcopal Ministry" to parishes in this diocese who request it.

I believe it is time for those of us who support such blessings to insist that we not be required to act against our conscience either. We have acted carefully and prayerfully over the many long years in faithful obedience to what we have discerned to be God's call to us. We have acted completely within the canons and procedures of both the Anglican Church of Canada and the Diocese of New Westminster. We have treated those who disagree with us with love and respect and safeguarded their

right to think, feel, and believe as they do. We have done all that was necessary and more. Enough! Now it is time to stop and let the rest of the world catch up to the work of God's Spirit among us. A moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions or a moratorium on authorizing additional parishes in the diocese to so bless such unions is not, in my view, moving God's work forward.

Perhaps we are mistaken when we say that this is God's work among us. Perhaps. Be that as it may, I believe we are called simply to reaffirm the motion we passed on May 23rd, 2002. A resolution to that effect will be presented at our Synod this year. Of one thing we can be certain, if all that we are doing is not of God, it will not prosper. That should give all of us some comfort.



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## CHRISTOPHER SENYONJO

The Church of Uganda will arraign gay sympathiser Bishop Christopher Senyonjo before the provincial tribunal if he continues to ask the church to soften its position on homosexuality.

The Provincial Secretary Church of Uganda, the Rev. Aaron Mwesigye Kafundizeki, sounded the warning after Senyonjo wrote in the New Vision saying, "the Church should listen to the silenced, perplexed, intimidated, abused and marginalised homosexuals."

Senyonjo suggested that the church should have dialogue with homosexuals.

"Bishop Senyonjo and company will soon face a Church of Uganda Provincial tribunal if he continues to provoke the Church of Uganda leadership and the entire Anglican Communion," Kafundizeki said.

*Jude Etyang, New Vision, Kampala, Uganda*

## MORATORIUM REDUX

In a press release issued today, Inclusive Church [based in the UK] has called for a new "moratorium." This time they want a moratorium on persecution of gays and lesbians throughout the Communion so that they, and their supporters may speak freely without persecution.

"The Windsor Report has repeated the call for the Anglican Church to listen to the experience of gay men and women made at the last three Lambeth Conferences. If the church is to take this call seriously, it must create a safe environment in which people can talk. In particular, this means that clergy must be able to speak out without fear of losing their job or having other sanctions placed on them. InclusiveChurch calls for a clear and unequivocal moratorium on the disciplining of lesbian and gay clergy who wish to speak honestly about their sexuality."

[www.inclusivechurch.net](http://www.inclusivechurch.net)

## LEADERSHIP IN LINCOLN

A senior Anglican bishop has commissioned the Church of England's first official service to recognise gay couples and cohabiting heterosexuals.

John Saxbee, Bishop of Lincoln, has instructed staff to draw up the liturgy in which those in "non-marriage relationships" are able to step forward in church and give thanks to God for their union.

The move stops short of introducing a "marriage" service for gays, but it is likely to anger traditionalists and wreck attempts by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to heal the rift in the church over homosexuality.

Although there have been unofficial blessings of gay relationships in parish churches, never before has a diocese or a bishop sanctioned a rite for homosexual relationships.

*Christopher Morgan, The Sunday Times, London, England*

## GOD'S GIFTS IN CREATION

Gay and lesbian Christians have not chosen to be perverse, but have discovered that being homosexual is simply a given. This is often experienced as an enormous burden; however, belonging to the community of the baptized in which all are honored for the gifts they bring, provides the opportunity to claim this givenness as a gift of the Creator, and to offer the gift of this life in service to God and to others.

It is our conviction that lesbian and gay Christians manifest the same gifts of grace as heterosexual Christians in their covenant relationships of faithful love, reflecting the same divine blessing. (Our marriage rites are clear that childbearing, although it is also a divine blessing, is not the foremost blessing that we celebrate in marriage.) We have come to this conviction not because we have abandoned our convictions regarding the sanctity of marriage, but because we recognize that same sanctity in faithful same-sex relationships, when two people are united in love, as Christ is united with his Church. We have learned to rejoice in the richness and diversity of creation, and not to call unclean what God has created clean.

<http://www.associatedparishes.org/plmstatement.pdf>

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