



MEDIA RELEASE

Local Churches Break Away from Anglican Diocese of Niagara

Hamilton, Ontario. Two local Anglican Church congregations voted Sunday to leave the Diocese of Niagara, and ultimately the Anglican Church of Canada, to seek a more conservative leadership. The two churches are St. Hilda's in Oakville and St. George's in Lowville.

The dividing issue is the blessing of same sex unions. While the Anglican Church of Canada does not sanction or perform same sex marriages, the issue of blessing same sex relationships is still under debate by the Church. A small, ultra conservative group of Anglicans, represented by the two parishes, decided behind closed doors to leave the Diocese. The leaders of the group have aligned themselves with the conservative religious group called The Network.

The priest of St. George's Church refused the entry of its Archdeacon on the day of the vote, leaving an appeal from the Bishop unread and unheard by parishioners. The appeal offered the congregation the opportunity to remain in the Diocese, under alternative leadership. The vote to join the Network was not sanctioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams; the Primate of Canada, Frederick Hiltz; or the Bishop of Niagara, Ralph Spence. This effectively means that the break-away parishes have defied the Canon Law of the Church, and are no longer considered officially Anglican.

“Although we are deeply saddened to see these parishioners leave, our main concern is for the well being of those left behind. We believe that many of the parishioners who voted to leave may have been pressured and intimidated to do so, and we are here to support them and those who choose to stay in every way possible,” says Michael Patterson, executive officer of the Diocese of Niagara.

“People are free to leave the Church, and we are saddened by that, but congregations are not free to break away. The patrimony of this church belongs to the generations before and the generations to come who wish to remain within the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Church of Canada,” says coadjutor Bishop Michael Bird.

Both church buildings and their contents legally belong to the Diocese of Niagara. Steps will be taken by the bishop and lawyers of the Diocese to place new clergy leaders and new wardens loyal to the Anglican Church of Canada into these two churches.

“St. Hilda and St. George will be open on Sundays for those wishing to attend a traditional Anglican service and communion. Doors will be open to newcomers as well as those who have had a change of heart since the vote,” Archdeacon Patterson says.

St. Hilda's is located at 1258 Rebecca Street .in Oakville, while St. George's is located at 7051 Guelph Line and Derry Road in Lowville.

The Synod of Diocese of Niagara's mission is to ensure the growth of healthy, spiritually vibrant, outward looking faith communities. The diocese has held membership with the Anglican Church of Canada since 1875.

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For more information, please contact: Michael Patterson
Days: (905) 527-1316 ext.257
michael.patterson@niagara.anglican.ca