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The Montreal Declaration of Anglican Essentials

‘In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.’

St Augustine

In June 1994 a group of Canadian Anglican Evangelicals met in Montreal and drafted the following declaration of principles. The main body of the declaration was composed by the Rev Dr J I Packer, and it was approved overwhelmingly by the delegates. We are reprinting it here in order to make it more widely available to Anglicans around the world, who may be inspired by the Canadian example to reaffirm their own commitment to the essentials of the Christian Faith.

In the text, references to the Book of Common Prayer are to the Canadian Prayer Book of 1962. Also mentioned is the Book of Alternative Services (1985), which is a modern-language text similar in some ways to the English ASB, but closer to the American BCP (1979). The key point to notice is that like the English ASB, and UNLIKE the American BCP (1979), it enjoys no doctrinal authority in the Church. The Solemn Declaration of 1893 was printed with the revised Canadian Prayer Book of that year, and was intended to reassure churchpeople that the revision did not depart in fundamentals from the English Book of Common Prayer (1662).

As members of the Anglican Church of Canada from every province and territory, and participants in the Essentials 1994 Conference in Montreal, we unite in praising God for his saving grace and for the fellowship we enjoy with our Lord and with each other. We affirm the following Christian essentials:

1 The Triune God

There is one God, self-revealed as three persons, ‘of one substance, power and eternity’, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For the sake of the Gospel we decline proposals to modify or marginalize these names and we affirm their rightful place in prayer, liturgy, and hymnody. For the Gospel invites us through the Holy Spirit to share eternally in the divine fellowship, as adopted children of the God in whose family Jesus Christ is

8 The New Life in Christ

God made human beings in the divine image so that they might glorify and enjoy their creator forever, but since the Fall, sin has alienated us all from God and disorders human motivation and action at every point. As atonement and justification restore us to fellowship with God by pardoning sin, so regeneration and sanctification renew us in the likeness of Christ by overcoming sin. The Holy Spirit, who helps us practise the disciplines of the Christian life, increasingly transforms us through them. Sinlessness, however, is not given in this world, and we who believe remain flawed 'in thought, word and deed' until we are perfected in heaven. (Gen 1:26-28; 3; John 3:5-6; 16:13; Rom 3:23-24; 5:12; 1 Cor 12:4-7; 2 Cor 3:17-18; Gal 5:22-24; Eph 2:1-5; Phil 2:13; 2 Pet 3:10-13. Cf Articles IX-XVI; *Book of Alternative Services* p191)

9 The Church's Ministry

The Holy Spirit bestows distinctive gifts upon all Christians for the purpose of glorifying God and building up his church in truth and love. All Christians are called in their baptism to be ministers, regardless of gender, race, age, or socio-economic status. All God's people must seek to find and fulfil the particular form of service for which God has called and equipped them.

Within the priesthood of all believers we honour the ministry of word and sacrament to which bishops, priests and deacons are set apart by the Ordinal. (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:11; 12:4-7, 27; 2 Cor 5:20; Gal 2:16; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Tim 3:1, 12-13; 5:17; Heb 2:11; 1 Pet 2:4-5, 9-10. Cf Articles XIX, XXIII)

10 The Church's Worship

The primary calling of the church, as of every Christian, is to offer worship, in the Spirit and according to truth, to the God of creation, providence, and grace. The essential dimensions of worship are praise and thanksgiving for all good things, proclamation and celebration of the glory of God and of Jesus Christ, prayer for human needs and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and self-offering for service. All liturgical forms – verbal, musical, and ceremonial – stand under the authority of Scripture.

The *Book of Common Prayer* provides a biblically-grounded doctrinal standard, and should be retained as the norm for all alternative liturgies. It should not be revised in the theologically-divided climate of the contemporary church. The *Book of Alternative Services* meets a widely-felt need for contemporary liturgy, and brings life and joy to many Anglican worshippers.

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No form of worship can truly exalt Christ or draw forth true devotion to him without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer, public and private, is central to the health and renewal of the church. Healing, spiritual and physical, is a welcome aspect of Anglican worship. (John 4:24; 16:8-15; Acts 1:8; 2:42-47; Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 11:23-26; 12:7; 2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 1:4-5; 5:19. Cf The Solemn Declaration of 1893 p viii *BCP*; Articles XXV, XXXIV)

11 The Priority of Evangelism

Evangelism means proclaiming Jesus Christ as divine Saviour, Lord, and Friend, in a way that invites people to come to God through him, to worship and serve him, and to seek the empowering of the Holy Spirit for their life of discipleship in the community of the church. All Christians are called to witness to Christ, as a sign of love both to him and to their neighbours. The task, which is thus a matter of priority, calls for personal training and a constant search for modes of persuasive outreach. We sow the seed, and look to God for the fruit. (Matt 5:13-16; 28:19-20; John 3:16-18; 20:21; Acts 2:37-39; 5:31-32; 1 Cor 1:23; 15:2-4; 2 Cor 4:5; 5:20; 1 Pet 3:15)

12 The Challenge of Global Mission

Cross-cultural evangelism and pastoral care remain necessary responses to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. His command to preach the gospel world-wide, making disciples and planting churches, still applies. The church's mission requires missions.

Christ and his salvation must be proclaimed sensitively and energetically everywhere, at home and abroad, and cross-cultural mission must be supported by praying, giving, and sending. Global mission involves partnership and interchange, and missionaries sent by younger churches to Canada should be welcome. (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 10:2; Rom 15:23-24; 1 Cor 2:4-5; 9:22-23; 2 Cor 4:5; 8:1-4, 7; Eph 6:19-20; Phil 2:5-7; 1 Thess 1:6-8)

13 The Challenge of Social Action

The Gospel constrains the church to be 'salt' and 'light' in the world, working out the implications of biblical teaching for the right ordering of social, economic, and political life, and for humanity's stewardship of creation. Christians must exert themselves in the cause of justice and in acts of compassion. While no social system can be identified with the coming Kingdom of God, social action is an integral part of our obedience to the Gospel. (Gen 1:26-28; Is 30:18; 58:6-10; Amos 5:24; Matt 5:13-16; 22:37-40; 25:31-46; Luke 4:17-21; John 20:21; 2 Cor 1:3-4; James 2:14-26; 1 John 4:16; Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10. Cf Article XXXVIII)

14 The Standards of Sexual Conduct

God designed human sexuality not only for procreation but also for the joyful expression of love, honour, and fidelity between wife and husband. These are the only sexual relations that biblical theology deems good and holy.

Adultery, fornication, and homosexual unions are intimacies contrary to God's design. The church must seek to minister healing and wholeness to those who are sexually scarred, or who struggle with ongoing sexual temptations, as most people do. Homophobia and all forms of sexual hypocrisy and abuse are evils against which Christians must ever be on their guard. The church may not lower God's standards of sexual morality for any of its members, but must honour God by upholding these standards tenaciously in face of society's departures from them.

Congregations must seek to meet the particular needs for friendship and community that single persons have. (Gen 1:26-28; 2:21-24; Matt 5:27-32; 19:3-12; Luke 7:36-50; John 8:1-11; Rom 1:21-28; 3:22-24; 1 Cor 6:9-11, 13-16; 7:7; Eph 5:3; 1 Tim 1:8-11; 3:2-4, 12)

15 The Family and the Call to Singleness

The family is a divinely ordained focus of love, intimacy, personal growth and stability for women, men and children. Divorce, child abuse, domestic violence, rape, pornography, parental absenteeism, sexist domination, abortion, common-law relationships, and homosexual partnerships, all reflect weakening of the family ideal. Christians must strengthen family life through teaching, training, and active support, and work for socio-political conditions that support the family. Single-parent families and victims of family breakdown have special needs to which congregations must respond with sensitivity and support.

Singleness also is a gift from God and a holy vocation. While single, Christians are called to celibacy and God will give them grace to live in chastity. (Ps 119:9-11; Prov 22:6; Matt 5:31-32; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:21-6:4; Col 3:18-21; 1 John 3:14-15)

The New Beginning

Together we affirm the Anglican Christianity that finds expression in the historic standards of the ecumenical creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Solemn Declaration of 1893, and the 1962 *Book of Common Prayer*. Respect for these standards strengthens our identity and communion. In humility we recognize we have often been ashamed of the gospel we have received and disobedient to the Lord of the Church. God helping us, we resolve to maintain our heritage of faith and transmit it intact. This fullness of faith is needed both for Anglican renewal and for the effective

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proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We invite all Anglicans to join us in affirming the above as essentials of Christian faith, practice, and nurture today. In this declaration we believe that we are insisting upon only what is genuinely essential. In regard to non-essentials, we should recognize and respect that liberty and that comprehensiveness which have been among the special graces of our Anglican heritage.

Participants in Essentials '94, with the Sponsoring Bodies:

Anglican Renewal Ministries of Canada

Barnabas Anglican Ministries

The Prayer Book Society of Canada

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