

THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF COVENANTING CONGREGATIONS
WITHIN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA (Corporation # 277932-3-M)

BLOWING A WHISTLE IN CRITICAL TIMES

Alarmed by where the United Church of Canada (UCC) is heading, the National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations (NACC), a group within the UCC, today takes the unusual step of appealing directly, and over the head of United Church officialdom, to Commissioners of the General Council, and to the church at large, through the attached open letter.

The United Church now publicly acknowledges that it is in trouble. One of the most striking signs of this is its startling and ongoing drop in membership (48% between 1965 and 2007). The trend is decades long, and the NACC feels it must now blow two important and very public whistles: one to assert that the UCC's decline is largely due to its gradual but deliberate departure from the orthodox faith, and the other to suggest that senior church authorities have played a critical role in supporting and promoting that.

The NACC, which remains an integral and loyal part of the denomination, has from time to time commented on these two points but to little effect. It sees the first whistle, regarding the dilution of the UCC's officially authorized faith, to be the more serious, even were it really motivated by a desire to make the authentic Gospel more comprehensible. While possibly attracting a scattered few, the process has also driven away large numbers of the denomination's orthodox members and deterred many who come to us seeking a substantive faith.

The most recent manifestation of this ongoing revisionist process is *A Song of Faith*, approved by the General Council of 2006. Originally justified as merely a restatement of the denomination's faith in contemporary language, it in fact de-emphasized or omitted key essentials, while simultaneously introducing long-rejected heretical and pagan elements. (Encl.)

After carefully examining this new faith statement, the NACC, following established procedures, formally challenged it as containing doctrinal changes which, according to the UCC's own constitution, should not have been approved without prior endorsement by the wider denomination. These were *major* departures from the UCC's foundational and referential faith statement, but the church's central leadership rejected the case presented to it, and the NACC's request that it be granted an appeal hearing was refused, without substantive explanation.

Presumably that was expected to end the affair, but the NACC has decided it does not have the luxury of walking away. Why not? - (1) Because it believes the very existence of the UCC is at stake. (2) Because the denomination must stop using trendy theological change as a survival strategy. (3) Because the formulaic, *pro forma* explanation for the rejection of the NACC's challenge is just another example of how, wherever possible, church authorities quietly use process to bury inconvenient problems. This too must stop.

Regular channels of recourse being exhausted, the NACC therefore takes the unusual step of making a direct appeal to the wider denomination, through the attached open letter. The Alliance regrets that the intransigence of church authorities has forced its hand in this matter, but it hopes that the wider body, including the congregational grassroots, will take an interest and insist on an unambiguous return to the substance of the historic Christian faith and an end to deliberate manipulation of process.

Encl.

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