

## ***A Statement from the House of Bishops to the Members of General Synod***

Pursuant to section 25 a) of the Constitution of the General Synod the Primate gives notice that the House of Bishops desires to submit to the Anglican Church of Canada General Synod 2007 the following statement which is concurred in by the House of Bishops:

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, meeting from April 16-20, 2007, once again discussed the question of the blessing of same sex unions. Once again a number of diverse opinions were expressed. Again questions were raised about theology, scripture, discipline, and our church's constitution. However we did find a common strong concern for the pastoral care of all members of our church. While not all bishops can conceive of condoning or blessing same-sex unions, we believe it is not only appropriate but a Gospel imperative to pray with the whole people of God, no matter their circumstance. In so doing we convey the long standing Gospel teaching that God in Christ loves each person and indeed loves him/her so much that Christ is calling each person to change and grow more fully into God's image and likeness. To refuse to pray with any person or people is to suggest God is not with them. All of us fall short of the glory of God but all are loved by God in Christ Jesus. We believe that in offering the sacraments we invite God's transformative action in people's lives.

- We certainly hope no child is denied baptism solely on the basis of the sexual orientation, or the marital status, of the parents. It is inconsistent and unacceptable to deny baptism to children as a way of imposing discipline on the sexual behaviour of the parents.
- We hope no baptized Christian will be denied communion or confirmation because of being in a committed homosexual relationship or because of their marital status.

We are committed, as bishops in Canada, to develop the most generous pastoral response possible within the current teaching of the church. We offer the following examples of possible pastoral responses:

- When a civilly married gay or lesbian couple seeks our church's reception of their civil marriage and asks their parish's recognition, it may be possible, with their bishop's knowledge and permission, to celebrate a Eucharist with the couple, including appropriate intercessory prayers, but not including a nuptial blessing.
- When a gay or lesbian married or committed couple seeks to hold a reception or celebration in a church for their life in Christ, again intercessory prayers for their mutual fidelity, the deepening of their discipleship and for their baptismal

ministry may be offered, not including the exchange of vows and/or a nuptial blessing.

To the gay and lesbian licensed clergy of our church, we again affirm your ministry as deeply valued and appreciated, and we acknowledge the pain and conflict that many of you live with daily in your ministry in Christ.

To those who experience these pastoral statements and possible pastoral provisions as inadequate or insufficient, we recognize that they are less than the blessing of same sex unions or marriage. However it is the discernment of the majority of the House of Bishops that as of today the doctrine and discipline of our church does not clearly permit further action, although we acknowledge that General Synod 2007 will vote on several resolutions on the blessing of same sex unions.

To those who fear that these pastoral provisions have gone too far, we assert that this discipline is entirely consistent with the doctrine of the Church and with our membership in the Anglican Communion, and fits within the pastoral guidelines of the Windsor Report (paragraph 143). We call upon every member of the Anglican Church of Canada to continue in their faithful discipleship and the work of theological and scriptural reflection and dialogue. We are each called to participate in God's mission in the world and we believe we will do this by the grace of the Risen Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Looking ahead, we ask the Primate and General Synod for a report on:

- 1) The theological question whether the blessing of same sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine (St. Michael Report)
- 2) The implications of the blessing of same sex unions and /or marriage for our church and the Communion (The Windsor Report)
- 3) Scripture's witness to the integrity of every human person and the question of the sanctity of human relationships.

We ask that this report be available in advance of General Synod 2010.

We commit to taking this ongoing conversation to the Lambeth Conference 2008.

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The Right Reverend Donald Phillips  
Secretary to the House of Bishops  
April 30, 2007

