

**Statement of the National House of Bishops
Anglican Church of Canada
October 26, 2006**

We believe that as bishops we are called to exercise special responsibility in maintaining the unity of the church. We seek to provide leadership as we grapple with the issues posed by our continuing debate around human sexuality.

We believe that the Canadian Church will be looking for one or more significant decisions on these matters at General Synod 2007, and that further inaction, or the perception of stalling, may result in widespread disobedience in many parts of our Province and possibly further impair our relationship with the Anglican Communion.

We are aware that we occupy different places in the spectrum of convictions and hopes in the Canadian Church. We are happy to share the experience of affirming much that is common between us.

We welcome the work done by the St. Michael's Report and the Windsor Report, particularly their identification of the nature of the doctrinal issues involved. We believe General Synod resolutions on these matters that engage their recommendations seriously will increase our credibility both within the church and within the communion. We believe the converse will also apply.

Our assessment of the current situation is that, doctrinally, there is no common mind in the church concerning the grounds for giving or withholding the blessing of same sex unions. Substantial numbers of our church, however, believe passionately that those doctrines have already been decided. We believe that further argument alone is unlikely to move people from their positions at this time. We believe the task of General Synod 2007 is to find an appropriate course of action for our situation. Paradoxically, if a way to live together as a church can be found, a theological consensus might develop within a framework of stability.

We advise against a change in the marriage canon at this time.

We believe that we should undertake intentional diplomacy in our international relationships within the Anglican Communion.

We urge the Church to show pastoral understanding and sensitivity to all same-sex couples, including those civilly married. As the National House of Bishops we agree to develop pastoral strategies to give effect to the acceptance of gays and lesbians to whom

we are already committed by previous General Synod and COGS resolutions, House of Bishops guidelines, and Lambeth Conference statements.

We recommend the following processes for the consideration of the 2007 General Synod:

- We believe that it is essential that there should be adequate time to consider what will be on the table. To assist in promoting useful discussion, we recommend substantial use of the Synod sitting as Committee of the Whole.
- We share great wariness about the possibility of surprise motions, and urge attention and sensitivity to energy levels and emotions around important issues, and an avoidance of the passage of contradictory motions.