

July 18, 2019

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ

I write this letter to clarify the situation in the Diocese of Edmonton in regard to marriage in the Church. I received with gratitude the Word to the Church from the Council of General Synod and the affirmations that were proposed and endorsed by General Synod 2019.

I am so truly sorry for the pain and hurt we have inflicted across the church to those who hold differing views and theologies of marriage – traditional and non-traditional. It is my prayer that by the end of this Synod we found a way to address the hurt that has been caused and that we were able to find a way forward with two different views of marriage affirmed and respected.

I want to assure you that for my part each of you are loved, precious, and welcomed into every sacrament of the Anglican Church of Canada here in the Diocese of Edmonton. Let me now talk specifically about marriage in the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton.

All couples who are legally permitted to marry may seek to have that marriage solemnized in the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton. The typical requirements for marriage in the Anglican Church still stand, e.g. at least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian, marriage preparation is to be completed, marriages are solemnized using the approved forms of liturgy of the church and the marriage takes place in a church or public place. On my own authority I have made available to the clergy of the diocese an edited BAS marriage liturgy. I ask those of you whose conscience permits you to solemnize same gender marriages to use this liturgy and no other. There will be no special marriage commission or different processes.

Here is my reasoning for my actions – reason with which some of you may be in accord and some may not be – I ask your charity.

1. This has indeed been a long season of deep pain for the whole church. I quote from the “Word to the Church” p5/6  
We have witnessed disdain and failure of charity toward those who hold differing understandings of marriage:
  - a) toward the LGBTQ2S+ communities;
  - b) toward those who stand in one of the traditions regarding marriage that would lead them to oppose the change;
  - c) toward those who stand in one of the traditions regarding marriage that would lead them to favour the change;
  - d) toward Indigenous persons and communities; and

e) toward those who have proceeded in good faith to authorize rites for same-sex marriage. Whatever the actions of the church at this General Synod, we lament the harm that has come to persons and communities in the course of fifty years of conversation, not all of it measured or loving.

2. I am in agreement with our national chancellor David Jones in his summation from 2016 reproduced here from A Word To The Church:  
In the memo of 2016 June entitled ISSUES IN DEALING WITH RESOLUTION A051 (the motion to amend the Marriage Canon), the Chancellor of the General Synod, David Jones QC, wrote: There is no specific prohibition of same sex marriage in the existing canon. Not passing the resolution is not the same as passing the opposite resolution. ... In the absence of a prohibition by General Synod against same-sex marriages, Provincial Synods have authority and jurisdiction with respect to "... the authorization of special forms of prayers, services and ceremonies for use within the province, for which no provisions have been made under the authority of the General Synod or of the House of Bishops of The Anglican Church of Canada": Section 7 viii) of the Declaration of Principles. ...In addition, bishops retain some inherent "powers, jurisdiction and authority": Section 9 of the Declaration of Principles
3. In our statement at GS2019 after the vote the House of Bishops said "We are walking together in a way which leaves room for individual dioceses and jurisdictions of our church to proceed with same-sex marriage according to their contexts and convictions, sometimes described as "local option."

Together, we affirm the inherent right of Indigenous peoples and communities to spiritual self-determination in their discernment and decisions in all matters.

Although we as bishops are not able to agree, in the name of Jesus Christ, we commit to conduct ourselves "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2-3)."

4. I hold by the Affirmations agreed to at GS2019.  
AFFIRMATIONS Council of General Synod asks General Synod and the whole church to make the following affirmations.  
Affirmation #1 Indigenous Spiritual Self-determination Whatever the action of the church at this General Synod, we affirm the right of Indigenous persons and communities to spiritual self-determination in their discernment and decisions regarding same-sex marriage.  
Affirmation #2 Diverse Understandings of the Existing Canon We affirm that, while there are different understandings of the existing Marriage Canon, those bishops and synods who have authorized liturgies for the celebration and blessing of a marriage between two people of the same sex understand that the existing Canon does not prohibit same-sex marriage.  
Affirmation #3 Diverse Understandings and Teachings We acknowledge the ongoing reality that there is a diversity of understandings and teachings about marriage in the

Anglican Church of Canada, and we affirm the prayerful integrity with which those understandings and teachings are held.

Affirmation #4 Our Commitment to Presume Good Faith We affirm our commitment to presume good faith among those who hold diverse understandings and teachings, and hold dear their continued presence in this church.


Affirmation #5 Our Commitment to Stand Together We affirm our commitment to walk together and to preserve communion, one with another, in Christ, within this church, within our Anglican Communion, and with our ecumenical partners

I urge you not to view marriages between two persons of the same gender as being a different case whereby such marriages and the persons of the marriage are discussed by parish vestries in ways which we would not entertain for other opposite-gendered couples. I ask all parish vestries to talk together about how to be pastorally present to all people but please do not debate who is able or worthy to receive which sacrament

If it is hurtful for you to know that I am an advocate of inclusion in all sacraments for all the children of God regardless of sexuality, I am sorry to hurt you. However, please know that I completely support clergy to act in this matter according to their consciences and reemphasize that no one should feel coerced to solemnize a marriage between any two persons. As your bishop I will support each and every member of the clergy whether they hold a traditional understanding of marriage or not, I simply ask you to stay at the table with us.

The need for healing is great, as is the need to find a way to walk forward together. We as a Church have a huge task ahead to show ourselves to be a place of love and belonging for all.

In Christ's love,



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