



Process for the Consideration of Proposed Changes to General Synod’s Marriage Canon 157th Regular Session of Synod

November 2017

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Presenter Bios

Marge Wattes Knebel, MDiv, ODT

Marge is from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), and is past Chairperson of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. She has served on many committees within the Lutheran community, including ELCIC’s National Church Council. She has been a member of the Toronto Diocese’s Postulancy Committee for 10 years.

The Rev. Chris Harper

Chris is the Indigenous Native Priest of the Anglican Diocese of Toronto. Reverend Harper strives to help faith groups understand the needs and potential of Indigenous ministries, especially in terms of implementing the 94 Calls to Action, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reverend Harper also endeavors to build bridges of understanding, faith, healing and peace. His ministry reaches out to those seeking and in need, as well as those along the sidelines in all communities. His invitation always is to join him in the journey of life and faith, Building the community in joined ministry to the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan

Alyson was Director for Unity Faith and Order for the Anglican Communion from 2009 until her retirement in 2015; for the first half of 2015 she was the Interim Secretary General of the Communion. From 1991 to 2009 she served the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada as Ecumenical Officer and then as Director of Faith Worship and Ministry. She was seconded staff to the Lambeth Conferences of 1998 and 2008. She is a priest and canon of the Diocese of Brandon and an honorary assistant at St. Martin in-the-Fields in Toronto.

The Rev. Mark Regis

Mark serves as an Associate Priest at St. Paul, Bloor Street with a focus in discipleship and small group ministry. There he also helps foster spiritual and leadership formation in individuals. He serves in wider Diocesan ministry as a member of the Postulancy Committee which discerns future clergy, and participates in ongoing dialogue for the future flourishing of gospel ministry.

Synod Presentation

Archbishop Johnson

Earlier this year I held two consultations, which included a wide variety of people, to gain advice on two matters:

- 1) how to deal with the two-year gap between when our General Synod members would be elected and when the General Synod meeting will take place, and
- 2) to gather insights, wisdom and experience on how our Diocese might engage in a process that would allow for the “consideration” of General Synod’s motion to change the Marriage Canon.

In response to the first matter, Diocesan Council has concurred with my recommendation to hold an extraordinary Regular Session of Synod in our “off” year. This will allow us to elect our General Synod members closer to the actual General Synod meeting date. It will also allow more time for a process to deal with the second matter.

I have put together a small group consisting of Marg Watters Knebel (Chair), Mr. Chris Ambidge, the Rev. Canon Susan Bell, Ms. Pamela Boisvert, the Rev. Chris Harper, the Rev. Canon Philip Hobson, the Rev. Ian LaFleur, Mr. Ryan Ramsden, the Rev. Mark Regis, facilitated by Ms. Janet Marshall. The group’s mandate is to formulate a process for our Diocese that will start in a few moments and continue at our next Regular Session of Synod in November 2018.

Introduction

Marge Watters Knebel

Thank you, Your Grace and Good Afternoon Synod Members,

Allow me to start by directing you to the package of paper with the blue cover sheet. It was placed on your tables a few minutes ago. It contains a hard copy of my presentation and that of each of my colleagues.

Thank you to Laura Walton who just reviewed the process governing the proposed changes to the Marriage Canon, and to Archbishop Colin for briefing us on actions taken in the Toronto Diocese since General Synod 2016.

We find ourselves in the meantime, between General Synod votes. It is a time to consider the proposed change to the canon, and our committee’s mandate is to create a process for such “consideration” that will carry us from today to Synod 2018 and on to General Synod 2019.

Both our Primate, Fred and Archbishop Colin have written pastoral responses that set the tone for this process. In a statement dated July 14, 2016, the Primate writes: “More than ever we must make efforts not to turn away from one another, but rather to one another, not to ignore but to recognize one another, not to walk apart but together.” In a Pastoral Statement dated September 27th of this year, which is available on the Diocesan website, Archbishop Colin writes: “All of us need to extend to each other the

most generous Christian charity that Jesus our Redeemer calls us to exercise as we, together, seek to discern and live out God's will."

What we do here in the Toronto Diocese is quite important. It will be noticed. As the largest and most multicultural Canadian diocese we have a distinctive voice within the Canadian church. We have an opportunity to be a beacon of hope for the wider church, by responding in a way that models unity in diversity, celebrates the strengths and gifts of diversity and reflects our common commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the mission of the church. Our process may be of help to others and it will certainly be of interest as the National Church prepares for General Synod 2019.

The mandate before us is open-ended. Each diocese has been given the opportunity to consider the proposed change to the Marriage Canon in a way that makes sense for them. We have been given no specific directions or deliverables, and there is to be no vote. Our discussions and conversations need not be brought to any conclusion or decision. How we consider this is up to us.

This afternoon we ask for the help of this body in creating a process that will serve you, your parishes and the diocese. We want our plans to reflect your ideas and wishes. To further set the context for your conversations, each of my colleagues here on the podium with me will make a brief presentation. Again, their scripts are in print in the package with the blue cover sheet.

After my colleagues have spoken, I will ask you to discuss this at your tables and then, individually answer the question which we will put before you.

And now I'll turn the mike over to the Rev. Chris Harper.

The Rev. Chris Harper

John 13:34-35 ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you ³⁴ love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Greetings to you my Brothers and Sisters... my relatives. Today our journey of life and faith brings us together on this historic path, as one body, just as the church was prophesied, prayed for and ordained. Our ministry was always meant to witness **love, peace and hope for all creation** as our first and most important priority. Today we celebrate our diversity as one body, as a choir of varied parts and voices, lifting up our song as one in glory to God our Creator, as a church of the many, with varied ministries and worship styles... we bring ourselves together as one family, to consider, discern and reflect.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to see diversity and not be divided; to disagree and not desire domination; to value the commonalities of our shared faith above all differences so that our witness to the Gospel is not impaired. Can we listen with respect and reflect the peace of faith, Can we humble ourselves before we speak, can we offer honesty and truth; Can we respect the perspectives and faith of others, as much as we desire respect for our perspective and faith? As it is our Lord who calls us to a healing journey and relationship, can we then reflect His love and truth to all in respectful dialogue, truthful to our diversity and worthy of being one in the family of God, reflecting the love of Christ, for all Creation.

The Diocese of Toronto could stand as the poster child of diversity, for within we are many nations, communities, churches, and witnesses, and yet together we as one in the Diocese, can stand up and proclaim the love of God our creator, for all peoples, the children of His creation.

It is our diversity that we should celebrate with one voice, for in our diversity God reveals His glory and depth of love, for the love of the world He gave His Son. In our diversity we are all called and named as children of creation and God knows us, and we are called to be His peace to the world, and as hope was given to us in faith, we are to witness hope to all that we encounter in all that we think, say and do.

So I call you for a short time; express Love, Peace and Hope as only you can, as a child of Gods calling. Set aside the divisive chains of politics and our own personal sensitivities, so that we might walk together and respectfully see each other for who we have been called to be... a child of God in the family of God. Created in diversity, just as some us can grow hair... and others not so much, God created us this way, in our diversity, and in this we should celebrate; our diversity in love, peace and hope. (God bless our Synod)

And now I pass the mic over to Alyson Barnett- Cowan.

The Rev. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan

Your Grace, members of Synod:

You have on your tables a summary of some of the critical points in the discussion of homosexuality, same sex blessings and same sex marriage that has taken place in Toronto, Canada, and the Anglican Communion in the last 40 years, together with some of the key texts. I am grateful to Canon Eric Beresford and to the former librarian at Church House, Karen Evans, for much of the work.

The telling of history is always subjective, and I am sure that some of you will think that I have left out important pieces, and certainly will have skipped important parts of the text. But the list will give you a sense, at least, as to how the discernment of what the Church should do about these matters has evolved over the years.

What the dates and resolutions cannot tell you, of course, is the human dynamic that was at play as the discussions and debates took place, nor of how participants in conversation and synod sensed that the Holy Spirit was or was not at work amongst them. As a battle-scarred survivor of many of these actual experiences, in Toronto, in Canada, and in the Communion, I would wish that I could share a little of that aspect of these dates. For every Anglican who came to these tables came with their own personal experience, understanding and theology of human sexuality, and in most cases those have evolved over the past 40 years. You here in this room have your own long histories with these matters, and these are not insignificant. They are what you bring, in all your integrity, to this synod. Together with the minutes of this meeting, your memory of it will also be part of the history. 'I know; I was there.'

In looking back over the 40 years, there are some constants that stand out.

- 1) At every point there has been an attempt to understand all points of view, and to honour difference.
- 2) In all the settings – House of Bishops, Diocesan Synod, Lambeth Conference and more – there has been an attempt to reach consensus, even when that consensus has been that there can be no agreement on an actual outcome.

- 3) At every point the valued presence of gay and lesbian persons in the Church has been expressed. This was affirmed going back as far as the House of Bishops press release of 1978 ‘We believe as Christians that homosexual persons as children of God, have a full and equal claim, with all other persons, upon the love, acceptance, concern and pastoral care of the Church. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to guard against all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. We affirm that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens.’
 Again in 1995, General Synod affirmed as its first point “the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the church and condemns bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation.”
 Even the 1998 Lambeth Conference resolution I.10, tough as it sounded in other respects, said “We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ”
- 4) From 2003 the church, beginning with the blessing of same sex unions in New Westminster, began to try to discern what to do as a result of such acceptance.
 General Synod 2004 affirmed “the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same sex relationships” without coming to a conclusion as to what to do about that.
 General Synod 2007 “welcomed the Statement of the House of Bishops of October, 2006, urging the church to show pastoral understanding and sensitivity to all same-sex couples, including those civilly married, and committing the House 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.”
 General Synod 2010 recognized the pain of this process for those most personally affected: “We acknowledge diverse pastoral practices as dioceses respond to their own missional contexts. We accept the continuing commitment to develop generous pastoral responses. ... For many members of General Synod there is deep sadness that, at this time, there is no common mind. We acknowledge the pain that our diversity in this matter causes. We are deeply aware of the cost to people whose lives are implicated in the consequences of an ongoing discernment process. This is not just an ‘issue’ but is about people’s daily lives and deeply held faith commitments.”
 General Synod 2013 called for the changes to the Marriage Canon so that same sex marriage can be recognized; the first vote on these canonical changes took place in 2016 and, as required by the Constitution, the second vote, after consultation with dioceses and provinces, will take place in 2019.
- 5) I have not included the whole history of what has sometimes been called delegated episcopal oversight, but it has always been the case that protected space has always been made for those who dissent from a majority view.
- 6) The times when the Church has been in the most agony about these matters has been when people try to reach a decision without care, prayer, intentional listening, the inclusion of all perspectives, and a willingness to wait and consider more if there is not a clear way through.
- 7) Canadian Anglicans and our perspectives have been significant in the international arena. They have helped shaped the global conversation.

The Church has been at its best and at its worst through these times. When it is at its best has been when it has truly focused on listening: listening to the Scriptures, listening to the experience of gay and lesbian

people, listening to those who come from different cultural and theological contexts, listening to those who truly do not know what is right, listening to those who are convinced that they are right.

I've been asked to highlight a few times when the Canadian Church did seem to coalesce and find a common mind. One was the General Synod in Ottawa in 1995, when, in spite of very fierce debate, a resolution emerged which did not go as far as many would have hoped – that is, the consideration of a liturgical form for the blessing of same sex unions – but which called for the study to continue throughout the Church. Sometimes the discernment that it is not yet the time is true discernment, not stalling.

The second was at the General Synod in St Catharine's in 2004, which had a very carefully constructed process of listening. Increasingly the Canadian Church has learned from our indigenous members the value of the talking circle, and while it is impossible to do true justice to that method within the time constraints of a national or diocesan church meeting, a valiant attempt was made. Everyone's comments in each group were recorded and shared, so that the Synod had a sense of the whole range of the conversation, and drafters tried to craft a resolution that touched on the main points that emerged. This Synod led to the St Michael Report of the Primate's Theological Commission which did important theological work on same sex blessings in relationship to marriage.

The third was the General Synod in Halifax in 2010, which, using some of the same methodology, did not seek a resolution, but rather a consensus statement, and that was done. Those who took part in that Synod reflected that it had been holy space and that the principle of listening to every voice was honoured.

I could easily list the times when the opposite has happened, when process got in the way of discernment instead of serving it, and when people felt that they had been rudely overruled by a majority. Moreover, many in the church have expressed anguish about the length of time that this process has taken, and the personal cost to them.

But I would rather you lift up your heads to consider that the path of dialogue, far from keeping the Church from doing anything at all, is in fact the only path it can follow if it is to maintain its unity and seek the truth in all honesty.

The Rev. Mark Regis

The complexity of human gender and sexuality have been potent flashpoints in our shared discourse, locally, nationally, and globally, both within the Church and culture at large. These issues are at the very core of our relational and spiritual selves. To one degree or another many of us have witnessed or experienced strong convictions, tensions, and divisions, as competing understandings of gender and sexuality have shaken the Church in fundamental ways. The process and results of the vote to amend the marriage canon at General Synod 2016 were moments in our national Church's life that fully bared this ongoing struggle, and for many, significantly strained and even broke relational trust in our canonical processes and leadership. These events included the decision by several bishops to provisionally authorize same sex marriages when it initially appeared the motion had been defeated, and the ongoing provision before a second vote in 2019.

Following General Synod, Archbishop Colin called a series of meetings with clergy who hold to the historic definition of marriage to hear their concerns. This led to a process by which close to seventy clergy in our diocese of that conviction voiced their concerns officially, along with many lay people, culminating in facilitated discussions over two days with the Archbishop and a group of representative clergy in August

of this year. These discussions were facilitated by Canon Alyson Barnett-Cowan, and Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon, current Secretary General of the Communion. It was appropriate to have Communion representation as we share a Communion-wide struggle. During those discussions, a refreshed commitment to the validity of the historic understanding of marriage and those so convicted was affirmed, and a shared desire to move forward together as a diocese was upheld. This aim is reflected in the Archbishop's recent pastoral statement which can be found on the diocesan website.

Some of us listening today may be surprised or even unaware of the struggle that continues for many in our diocese around same sex marriage as a theological possibility and the process by which our Diocese has brought about change. Those who hold to the historic perspective experience how fatiguing this issue has been for the Church, and carefully seek to emphasize authentic engagement rather than isolation, and gracious discourse instead of holding old assumptions. This aim is reflected in Archbishop Colin's pastoral statement, where the College of Bishops strive to "maintain the highest degree of communion possible, and together participate in the mission to make the crucified and risen Christ known in the world."

The Canadian Church is in a process of discernment, and as this discernment continues, we in the Diocese of Toronto have a unique opportunity and possibly, even a charism, to engage and model a gracious way where divergent understandings of marriage and other significant matters of faith can faithfully bear with one another. Ongoing dialogue is essential in living this out. In his statement, Archbishop Colin gives structure to this hope and aim by committing to "continue the face-to-face conversations that will foster [that communion]."

Let us continue in prayer as we listen for God's voice in mission, asking for renewal, within a time of great cultural and ecclesiastical change.

Table Discussions

Ms. Marge Watters Knebel

Now we turn it over to you. We ask that you take the next 15 minutes to discuss with the others at your table the question that is projected on the screen. I'll read it:

"There will be a Regular Session of Synod in 2018 where proposed changes to General Synod's Marriage Canon will be discussed. What would be most helpful to you and the diocese in preparing for that conversation?"

Please note that in 2018 there will be a Diocesan discussion, not a vote.

When 15 minutes have passed, I will interrupt your conversations and ask you to individually record your ideas and suggestions on the blue paper where you will also find the question printed. Our committee will use your suggestions as we design a process for that conversation.

Following your 15 minutes of discussion, you will have 5 minutes to record your thoughts while we are here in the Ballroom, but then we need to clear out so the hotel staff can set up for dinner. If you are finished by 4:45, please leave your blue paper in the boxes at the exit doors. However, so that no one feels rushed, the boxes will remain here for your responses until the end of dinner this evening. **That's**

7:30 p.m. Members of our committee will compile your responses tonight and tomorrow at about 12:00, noon, we will report back to you the general themes and ideas that are emerging.

But before we begin these conversations, let's take a moment to centre ourselves in prayer.

"Lord God, You gave Solomon the wisdom to ask for a listening heart. Grant us the will and the wisdom to hear our sisters and brothers. Open our hearts, clear our minds and guard our conversations so that what we say and do here will reflect the love that you have for each and every one of us. In Jesus name we pray. Amen"

You now have 15 minutes to discuss the question projected on the screen with your table mates.

Responding to the Question

Ms. Marge Watters Knebel

Please use the next 10 minutes and the blue paper which has been placed on the tables to record your individual responses. This need not be a representation of what your table group said, nor need it be conclusive. This is not a vote. Please just give us your own thoughts on what would be helpful in the process of considering the proposed changes to the canon.

There are blue pieces of paper on the tables, and as you leave the Ballroom, please drop them in the boxes at the doors. For those who need more time, the boxes will be available until after dinner, 7:30 p.m.

Tomorrow at approximately 12:00, noon, we will take about five minutes to feed back to you the major themes emerging from your suggestions. Thank you so much for your participation.

Same-Sex Unions – A Brief Survey of the Conversations

- 1967 homosexual acts between consenting adults decriminalized in Canada.
- 1976 Human Sexuality Task Force report to Anglican Church
- 1978 House of Bishops Press Release:
'We believe as Christians that homosexual persons as children of God, have a full and equal claim, with all other persons, upon the love, acceptance, concern and pastoral care of the Church. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to guard against all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. We affirm that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens.
'It is clear from Holy Scripture that only the sexual union of male and female can find expression within the covenant [sic for covenant] of Holy Matrimony. In the heart of biblical teaching about creation we discover insights into the nature and purpose of sexuality. Rooted in God's creative purpose is the fulfillment and completion of male and female in each other, together with the procreative function of sexuality. Thus the Church confines its nuptial blessing to heterosexual marriages, and we cannot authorize our clergy to bless homosexual unions. We are aware that some homosexuals develop for themselves relationships of mutual support, help and comfort, about which the Church must show an appropriate concern. Such relationships, though, must not be confused with Holy Matrimony, and the Church must do nothing which appears to support any such suggestion.'
- 1979 House of Bishops' Resolution

"1. Our present and future considerations about homosexuality should be pursued within the larger study of human sexuality in its totality; 2. We accept all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, as equal before God; our acceptance of persons with homosexual orientation is not an acceptance of homosexual activity; 3. We do not accept the blessing of homosexual unions (see previous press release); 4. We will not call in question the ordination of a person who has shared with the bishop his/her homosexual orientation if there has been a commitment to the Bishop to abstain from sexual acts with persons of the same sex as part of the requirement for ordination." (Pastoral Statement on Human Sexuality)

- Various sexuality studies and processes, including 1985 study "Human Sexuality" – a number of Toronto clergy and laity were members of the task group.
- 1989 General Synod (St. John's NF) – asked for increased study of human sexuality and dignity of all before God
- 1990 National Executive Council asked the House of Bishops to update its 1979 Statements on human sexuality and ordination of persons of homosexual orientation.
- June 1991 Jim Ferry removed as incumbent of parish
 - Bishop's Court February 1992
 - Colin Johnson began as Executive Assistant to the Bishop March 1992
 - Bishop Finlay's decision and sentence to inhibit Jim Ferry, March 1992
- 1992 General Synod held in Toronto: Toronto members moved a motion that was adopted; Toronto clergy and laity facilitated study groups. Resolution: "That this General Synod request the House of Bishops and the National Executive Council to commission an immediate study of homosexuality and homosexual relationships, including: - modern scientific knowledge - the Church's understanding of Biblical teaching on homosexuality, human relationships, inclusiveness and justice - the experience of gays and lesbians who are committed Christians; and - that the study be completed, and a report with specific recommendations submitted to General Synod 1995, in a form that would be available to the whole Church."
- 1992 Report from the House of Bishops on the steps they were taking, including:

'We see the need for some further, more intensive study of the scriptures, particularly as they relate to sexuality, and we will undertake this in the Fall of 1993. Every age must struggle anew with the need to apply an unchanging gospel to a constantly changing environment. This is as true for us as it is for the church at large. All scripture is inspired by God, as Paul says, but not all receive the same understanding from it. We plan to spend a significant amount of time working with a number of respected theologians representing diverse approaches to scripture. From this we hope, in consultation with the rest of the church, to discern the mind of Christ for the body of Christ.'
- 1995 General Synod held in Ottawa–
 - That this General Synod affirms the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the church and condemns bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation.
 - That this General Synod: - encourage parishes and dioceses to continue, deepen, extend and adapt the learning, reflection and dialogue identified by the Task Force on Homosexuality and Homosexual Relationships (as reflected in Recommendations 1 through 4 of the Task Force Report). - encourage parishes and dioceses to give particular attention to the ongoing dialogue with respect to the issues identified in Recommendation 5 of the Task Force Report. - encourage parishes and dioceses to develop plans of action to further the dialogue as described in the Recommendations of the Task Force Report. - request the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee to make provision for leadership to ensure that this process continues at the parish and diocesan levels and that a report be made at the next General Synod.

- That this General Synod request that the Primate continue to encourage dialogue on "homosexuality and homosexual relationships" throughout the church.
- The following resolution was tabled (and was not lifted from the table, so was not voted on). That the Doctrine and Worship Committee, or its successor, initiate broad-based consultations within the Anglican Church of Canada concerning the liturgical recognition of committed monogamous same-gender unions, and report to the next General Synod.
- 1994-2004 Toronto Dialogue Group– a small mixed group to study and promote diocesan dialogue convened by Bishop Finlay
- 1997 October: House of Bishops statement on Human Sexuality included the following:

“The church affirms its traditional teaching that only the sexual union of male and female can find appropriate expression within the covenant of Holy Matrimony. However, we recognize that some homosexuals live in committed sexual relationships for mutual support, help and comfort. We wish to continue open and respectful dialogue with those who sincerely believe that sexuality expressed within a committed homosexual relationship is God's call to them, and we affirm our common desire to seek together the fullness of life revealed in Christ Blessing of Covenanted Relationships We continue to believe that committed same sex relationships should not be confused with Holy Matrimony. The house will not authorize any act that appears to promote this confusion. There is, and needs to be, ongoing discussion about how to respond appropriately to faithful and committed same sex relationships. In the context of the ongoing debate this would necessitate respectful listening and learning about the nature of such relationships and their meaning for the persons involved in them. We recognize that relationships of mutual support, help and comfort between homosexual persons exist and are to be preferred to relationships that are anonymous and transient. We disagree among ourselves about whether such relationships can be expressions of God's will and purpose.

While consensus may be unlikely in the near future, we believe that study and dialogue continue to be fruitful. As we continue to listen together to scripture, tradition, and reasoned argument based on the experience of the Church, including and especially the experience of its gay and lesbian members, we grow in our recognition that our disagreements reflect our attempts to be faithful to the Gospel in our different personal and pastoral contexts.

As long as such dialogue continues to be fruitful we believe it should continue. We are not ready to authorize the blessing of relationships between persons of the same sex. However, in interpreting the Gospel, we must always reflect on the context to which it is addressed. We are, therefore, committed to ongoing study of human sexuality and of the nature and characteristics of human intimacy and family life as it exists in our society...

Among our clergy there are some who are gay or lesbian. Their ministries are often highly dedicated and greatly blessed. God has endowed them with many intellectual and spiritual gifts and we give thanks for their ministries. We reaffirm that sexual orientation in and of itself is not a barrier to ordination or the practice of ministry within the church. Within the wider parameters of suitability, it is the manner in which sexuality is expressed that must be considered. Our intimate relationships are an expression of the most profound possibilities for human relationships, including our relationship with God (Eph.5:32). At ordination, candidates promise to live their lives and shape their relationships so as to provide a "wholesome example" to the people of God (BCP, 642). Exemplary behaviour for persons who are not married includes a commitment to remain chaste.”
- 1998 General Synod– “That this General Synod commend the House of Bishops for its statement "Human Sexuality" issued on October 29, 1997, and acknowledges the need for continuing study and dialogue. “

- Lambeth 1998 Section I produced a report on the subject of homosexuality outlining a variety of positions held by the bishops. It suggested that there not be a resolution. Nevertheless, a resolution was debated and eventually passed:

“This Conference: a. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality; b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage; c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God’s transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ; d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex; e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions; f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us; g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.”
- 1999-2002 Report on Conversations on Human Sexuality in the Anglican Communion– Archbishop Finlay was one of eleven members. They reported that they lived by this covenant:
 1. We will respect each other’s faith journey.
 2. We will listen respectfully.
 3. We will ask inviting questions.
 4. We will have flexible understanding, attempting to understand from the point of view of others.
 5. We will seek to learn from all perspectives.
 6. We will keep the topic in mind when speaking.
 7. We will not speak as individuals for the group apart from our common statement.
 8. We will not repeat each other’s comments after we leave. We are free to share learnings without attribution to individuals. Otherwise, we will respect the confidentiality of other’s statements.
 9. We will clarify the nature of our speaking. We will request clarification in good faith.

While they ‘were not able to reach a common mind regarding a single pattern of holy living for homosexual people’, they did, among other things, agree

 1. The Scriptures are foundational for all aspects of our work.
 2. The questions at issue centre on homosexual behaviour, not on homosexual people. We are called to love homosexual people as we are called to love any other people.
 3. Homosexuality is a much more varied phenomenon than the singular noun suggests; there are no “assured results” available to us from medical and other research into origins, causations, etc. Even if there were, Christians would not be relieved of the responsibility of making theological and ethical judgments.
- 2002 First Anglican blessing of same sex couple in New Westminster.
- September 2003: Archbishop of Canterbury established Lambeth Commission on Communion in the light of the anticipated consecration of a gay partnered bishop in The Episcopal Church and the blessing in New Westminster, and the intervention by Primates and bishops in Provinces other than their own; asked to find ways to continue to live in the highest degree of communion possible
- November 2003 Gene Robinson consecrated Bishop of New Hampshire

- 2003-2004 Toronto Diocesan Consultations– workshops on human sexuality throughout the diocese
- 2004 Same-Sex Consultation Group - in preparation for a special Synod
- May 2004 General Synod (St. Catherine’s, Niagara)
 - ‘1) Affirm that even in the face of deeply held convictions about whether the blessing of committed same sex unions is contrary to the doctrine and teaching of the Anglican Church of Canada, we recognize that through our baptism we are members one of another in Christ Jesus, and we commit ourselves to strive for that communion into which Christ continually calls us.
 - 2) Affirm the crucial value of continued respectful dialogue and study of biblical, theological, liturgical, pastoral and social aspects of humans sexuality; and call upon all bishops, clergy and lay leaders to be instrumental in seeing that dialogue and study continue, intentionally involving gay and lesbian persons;
 - 3) Affirm the principle of respect for the way in which the dialogue and study may be taking place, or might take place, in indigenous and various other communities within our church in a manner consistent with their cultures and traditions;
 - 4) Affirm that the Anglican Church is a church for all the baptized and is committed to taking such actions as are necessary to maintain and serve our fellowship and unity in Christ, and request the House of Bishops to continue its work on the provision of adequate episcopal oversight and pastoral care for all, regardless of the perspective from which they view the blessing of committed same sex relationships; and
 - 5) Affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same sex relationships.’

The original resolution brought to General Synod contained a section 2 which read “That this General Synod affirm the authority and jurisdiction of any diocesan synod, with the concurrence of its bishop, to authorize the blessing of committed same sex unions.” In the course of debate, a motion to defer this clause was moved and carried: That Resolution A134 be amended by: • Deferring consideration of section 2 until the meeting of General Synod in 2007; and during the period of deferral: • Request that the Primate ask the Primate’s Theological Commission to review, consider and report to the Council of General Synod, by its spring 2006 meeting, whether the blessing of committed same sex unions is a matter of doctrine; • That on receipt of such a report, the Council of General Synod distribute it to each province, diocese and the House of Bishops for consideration.

 - Bishop of Toronto’s Task Force on the Windsor Report 2005 established
- October 2004 Windsor Report of the Lambeth Commission on Communion requested, among other things, a moratorium on all the actions which had precipitated the report (ie the consecration of gay partnered bishops, the blessing of same sex unions, and interventions)
- November 27. 2004 Special Diocesan Synod
 - Votes to defer decision on blessing same-sex unions by narrow vote
 - Affirms the sanctity and integrity of adult, committed same sex relationships
- May 2005 Primate’s Theological Commission of the Anglican Church of Canada on the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions issued its St. Michael Report
 - ‘It is the determination of the Primate’s Theological Commission that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine. In reaching this conclusion, the Commission recognizes the range of interpretations given to the term ‘doctrine’. We do agree that the blessing of committed same-sex unions is not a matter of what is often referred to as core doctrine in the sense of being credal. It is a matter of doctrine that does not hinder or impair our common affirmation of the three historic creeds. We have indicated what we believe to be the primary lines of connection to the doctrines of salvation, incarnation, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, theological anthropology, sanctification, and holy matrimony. In our conviction that the blessing of same-sex unions is doctrinal, we are mindful of the burning pastoral issues involved. Doctrinal and pastoral concerns are not mutually exclusive, but profoundly connected. It is precisely the pastoral importance of this issue that demands

the dignity and integrity of a careful consideration of its doctrinal implications. The pastoral importance of this issue deserves a careful consideration of its doctrinal implications in a manner that is deeply respectful of the dignity and integrity of the gay and lesbian members of our church.'

- 2005 Civil marriage laws, initially overturned in various provincial jurisdictions, come into force across Canada allowing marriage between two qualified persons.
- June 2007 GS House of Bishops Statement on Pastoral Care of Same Sex Couples
- July 2007 General Synod (Winnipeg)
 - That this General Synod resolves that the blessing of same-sex unions is not in conflict with the core doctrine (in the sense of being creedal) of The Anglican Church of Canada.
 - Request the Council of General Synod to consider a revision of Canon XXI (On Marriage) including the theological rationale to allow marriage of all legally qualified persons and to report back to General Synod 2010.
 - Welcome the Statement of the House of Bishops of October, 2006, urging the church to show pastoral understanding and sensitivity to all same-sex couples, including those civilly married, and committing the House 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.
 - Ask the Primate to request the Primate's Theological Commission to consult with the dioceses and parishes and to report in advance of General Synod 2010 on:
 - 1. the theological question whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine;
 - 2. Scripture's witness to the integrity of every human person and the question of the sanctity of human relationships.
 - 2. Ask the Primate to request the Anglican Communion Task Force to report in advance of General Synod 2010 on the implications of the blessing of same-sex unions and/or marriage for our church and the Anglican Communion.
 - 3. Support and encourage dioceses to offer the most generous pastoral provision possible within the current teaching of the church to gays and lesbians and their families.
 - 4. Request Faith, Worship and Ministry to develop a process to engage the dioceses and parishes of the Anglican Church of Canada in a study of the Christian perspective of human sexuality through the lens of scripture, reason, tradition and current scientific understanding
- 2009 The Galilee Report of the Primate's Theological Commission— chaired by Bp Linda Nicholls – a series of discussion papers outlining various theological positions on human sexuality and related issues in response to GS 2007 without reaching a consensus.
- January 2009 – Toronto College of Bishops propose that a limited number of parishes be given episcopal permission to offer prayers and blessing 'but not the nuptial blessing' to same-sex couples 'in stable, long-term committed relationships'
- May 2009 Diocesan Synod indaba process— consensus – not unanimity – about implementing this.
- 2009-2010 Pastoral Response Advisory Group (PRAG) formed to formulate guidelines for the above decision.
- 2010 General Synod (Halifax) agreed statement:

"The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada met in Halifax, Nova Scotia in June of 2010. Together we entered into intentional conversations in order to hear where our Church is at this time in its life in relation to the matter of blessing of same gender unions. Our conversations were marked by grace, honesty and generosity of spirit towards one another. There was robust participation in the conversations. In dialogue we shared our passion for the mission of God in the world and our thoughts, feelings and convictions. We were attentive to each others' perspectives, experiences and stories and we shared a commitment to continued theological reflection and scriptural study as a foundation to our ongoing dialogue and discernment.

“We engaged these conversations within the particularity of our Canadian context – a country that is diverse and many cultured. Canadians have been learning how to dialogue across their diversities over the course of our national life. We do so with deeply held commitments to transparency and openness, an approach that is not without risk and that we affirm as a great gift. Often, in processes of discernment, the task is to see our way through a paradox.

“Our conversations affirmed the full inclusion of gay and lesbian members in our churches, aboriginal voices in our midst, and the wide range of perspectives on the issue of same gender blessings across all dioceses. Our dialogue has been a positive and helpful step in our discernment. At this time, however, we are not prepared to make a legislative decision. Above, in and through all of this, and despite all our differences we are passionately committed to walking together, protecting our common life.

“We acknowledge diverse pastoral practices as dioceses respond to their own missional contexts. We accept the continuing commitment to develop generous pastoral responses. We recognize that these different approaches raise difficulties and challenges. When one acts there are implications for all. There can be no imposition of a decision or action, but rather we are challenged to live together sharing in the mission of Christ entrusted to us, accepting that different local contexts call at times for different local discernment, decision and action.

“We are in a time of ongoing discernment which requires mutual accountability through continuing dialogue, diocese to diocese and across the wider church. It also requires continued theological and scriptural study and dialogue on the wide range of matters relating to human sexuality.

“For many members of General Synod there is deep sadness that, at this time, there is no common mind. We acknowledge the pain that our diversity in this matter causes. We are deeply aware of the cost to people whose lives are implicated in the consequences of an ongoing discernment process. This is not just an ‘issue’ but is about people’s daily lives and deeply held faith commitments. For some, even this statement represents a risk. For some the statement does not go nearly far enough.

“In the transparency and openness we have experienced with one another, we have risked vulnerability but it is in such places that we grow closer in the body of Christ and behold each other as gift. Abiding with each other, and with God we are sustained through struggle, patient listening, and speaking from the mind and heart together. We have experienced these conversations as a gift for us here at Synod and hope that they will be a further gift to the Anglican Church of Canada and to the wider Church.”

- October 2010 Pastoral Guidelines for the Blessing of Same Gender Commitments issued by the Anglican Diocese of Toronto College Bishops,
- July 2011 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada authorizes same sex marriages where pastor’s and congregation’s conscience permits.
- Diocesan Synod 2012 memorial to General Synod to provide for marriage of same sex couples on an equal basis – passed by counted vote
- 2013 General Synod (Ottawa) resolution to prepare a revision of the Canon on Marriage for two legally qualified persons, by GS 2016. The original motion by 2 lay members was amended to include consideration of a number of principles.
- September 2015 Marriage Canon Commission established, chaired by our Chancellor Bob Falby, then Bp Linda Nicholls: issues “This Holy Estate” for study.
- July 2016 General Synod (Toronto): First reading of the changes to the Marriage Canon approved by a 2/3 majority in each order.
- November 2016: Pastoral Guidelines for Same-Sex Marriages (Diocese of Toronto)

Pastoral Statement on Commitment to Diverse Theological Positions in the Diocese of Toronto

by the Most Reverend Colin R. Johnson, Archbishop of Toronto, and endorsed by the Bishops Suffragan of Toronto, the Right Reverend Peter Fenty, the Right Reverend Riscylla Shaw, the Right Reverend Kevin Robertson, and the Right Reverend Jenny Andison.

From the earliest expressions of an Anglican way of living out the Christian faith, there has been diversity. That diversity has historically taken many forms, from tension, conflict and violence, to coexistence, indifference, and eventual synthesis. Whatever the witness of the past, however, the Diocese of Toronto is committed to reflecting our own diversity in a way that avoids the conflictual examples with which we are, alas, too familiar.

We believe that there have been positive forms of difference that have allowed the church to flourish in many places and with many people, not only within Anglicanism, but elsewhere. It is this aspect of our heritage that we have valued in this Diocese, and as Bishops of this Diocese, it is a value we wish to affirm strongly and preserve faithfully. Unlike in some periods and places of Anglicanism, here at least our unity does not imply uniformity in all things.

My pastoral decision as Archbishop to make provision to permit the marriage of same-sex couples in prescribed conditions is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church. This is complex, multi-faceted, and unsettling. All churches are dealing with these matters, some more publicly as we are, some internally, but it is a discussion that is global. The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, with whom we share the historic episcopate, although we are not in communion with each other, and most of the Provinces of the Anglican Communion, remain unchanged in their teaching of the historic Christian understanding of marriage as a sacramental covenant between one woman and one man. Some other churches, including Lutheran Churches and Old Catholic Churches with whom we share full communion and a number of Provinces of the Anglican Communion, have adopted changes to include couples of the same sex. There are also divergent views about how people and institutions can and should respond in a period of change when the parameters of those changes have not been fully agreed. The history of Anglicanism as well as of the wider Church has shown that matters of the faith, including those governing sexual morals, are not straightforwardly, consistently or unanimously divided into important and not-so-important. It will undoubtedly take a very long time to come to consensus and may not do so.

In the Diocese of Toronto, we have formally and informally discussed issues of sexuality for nearly 50 years. When our General Synod in 2007 received the St Michael report, it adopted a resolution that same sex commitments have significant doctrinal implications but not at the level of core doctrine, that is, something needing to be held by all as a matter of salvation. A second motion was passed affirming that this is not a communion breaking issue. Obviously, this last motion expresses a hope, not a prescription, since matters of conscience cannot be legislated or coerced. I take the St. Michael report to open the possibility of a newly expanded understanding of marriage but, as a corollary, I believe it implicitly affirms the continuing Christian authenticity and legitimacy of those who hold a traditional understanding of marriage and the faithfulness of the theology and practice that support it.

In fact, the norm for the Church continues to be the marriage of couples of opposite sex. The Anglican Church of Canada is currently in a discernment process to include the marriage of same-sex couples. Until that decision has been finalised, and as an interim pastoral response, as Bishop of Toronto with canonical

authority and responsibility for the pastoral care and oversight of this Diocese, I have permitted a small number of priests, licensed to the cure of souls in a community, to preside in their parish at the marriage of a same-sex couple in certain limited circumstances. Both priest and congregation must concur that this ministry will be offered. No one will be obligated to act against their conscience. Neither parishes nor individual clergy will be required to celebrate marriages contrary to their convictions.

Not all welcome this new development: some because it goes too far, some because it is not enough. We recognize there are theological and cultural differences across our diocese and within parishes which are strained by both the limits and permission represented in blessing same sex relationships and more specifically marriage.

I wish to reiterate – and this is unanimously affirmed by the Area Bishops – that there is and will be a continued and honoured place in all aspects of diocesan life for those who do not agree to the provisional arrangements for same sex marriages. There is an authentic, sustainable conviction that bears significant and historic weight. It remains a coherent theological and biblical position within our Anglican tradition.

As Bishops we endorse unequivocally the principle that the Diocese of Toronto must honour and safeguard the diversity represented in its parishes and clergy, including those holding to an historic understanding of Christian marriage, so as to maintain the highest degree of communion possible, and together participate in the mission to make the crucified and risen Christ known in the world. We are personally committed to continue the face-to-face conversations that will foster this. This diversity will continue to be reflected in the selection, ordination and appointment of clergy, and in the lay and clerical membership of committees and councils of the diocese. It will also include the honoring of clergy conscience in the celebration and blessing of marriage.

We have seen that there is diversity within parishes that are generally opposed to same-sex commitments, just as there is in parishes that are generally in favour. There is a rich breadth of life in our parishes, with parishioners who are theologically astute, prayerful and deeply committed Christians legitimately holding differing convictions. We are in very different places and have been formed in very diverse contexts, theologically, spiritually, scripturally, experientially. The diversity of our diocesan community is a precious gift, challenging as it might be. It is vital to maintain this as it enriches not diminishes our common witness to the faith in a variety of ways. Though such witness is rooted in differing interpretations and understanding of Holy Scripture and the tradition, these are now within the contemporary spectrum of Anglicanism. They need to be engaged if we are to learn and grow together in fuller maturity in Christ. All of us need to extend to each the most generous Christian charity that Jesus our Redeemer calls us to exercise as we, together, seek to discern and live out God's will. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case, and we cannot condone such lack of charity. The Gospel and our baptismal covenant call us to love one another with the love of Christ and treat each other with dignity, respect and forbearance. We need to be tender with one another, recognizing each other as a beloved child of God redeemed by our Saviour Jesus Christ, each one bearing the image of God, each one the desire of God's heart and will.

Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, September 29, 2017