



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

College of Bishops' Statement Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

As is publicly known, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Justin Welby, has invited all active bishops in the Anglican Communion to attend the Lambeth Conference in the summer of 2020. We are pleased that all active bishops have been invited to participate fully in Lambeth 2020, a reality that was not made possible at Lambeth 2008, when Bishop Gene Robinson was not invited.

It has been a long tradition for bishops' spouses to be invited to attend Lambeth as well. However, this bidding has not been extended to same-gender spouses, including Bishop Kevin Robertson's spouse, Mr. Mohan Sharma. This act of exclusion is troubling to us. While we recognize that the issues involved in a decision of this nature are many-faceted, we wish to express our dismay and sadness at the pain that this causes all of us within the College of Bishops, but in particular Bishop Kevin and Mohan as our friends and co-labourers in the gospel. St. Paul expressed it well in 1 Corinthians 12:26, *If one member suffers, all suffer together with it...*

We also acknowledge that the Archbishop of Canterbury's decision not only touches Bishop Kevin and Mohan directly, but also sends ripples of sorrow, both locally and globally, especially within the LGBTQ community. Our diocese is strengthened, inspired and deepened by the faith and witness of our LGBTQ clergy and laity. As St. Paul continues in verse 26, *...if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.*

The Diocese of Toronto is richly diverse in culture and language, seeking to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ. In many ways our diocese is the Anglican Communion in microcosm, and we strive, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to make room for a breadth of theological understandings, including on the nature of Christian marriage. And while we sometimes stumble, and do not always agree with each other, we pledge to continue to pray together, to serve the world together, and to seek always to walk together, only by the abundant grace of God.

The National House of Bishops will be gathering for the annual spring meeting this coming week. We anticipate that this matter will occupy some time on our agenda. And while we do not know the mind of the House, we think it is important to share how we as a College have been wrestling with this issue. First, we are united and stand in solidarity as sister and brother bishops in care and love for Bishop Kevin and Mohan. Second, all of the Toronto bishops will be accepting the invitation to be present at Lambeth. We believe that our participation in the conference is crucially important because it provides us with a significant opportunity to witness to the grace and mercy of Christ being expressed in our local context. Our presence also gives us an opportunity to listen with humility to, and learn from, the rich and diverse voices and experiences of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Third, all of our spouses, including Mohan, will be going to England in 2020 in the spirit of mutual support and love. The degree to which each will participate in the conference is yet

to be determined. Our spouses have walked together in ministry with us here in our diocese and continue to respond with supportive witness of each other within the worldwide Anglican community.

The theme of the Lambeth conference in 2020 is God's Church for God's World: walking, listening and witnessing together. We hope that all of our sister and brother bishops from around the Communion will join us at Lambeth 2020. We ask for prayers for the Anglican Communion, and in particular for Archbishop Welby as he strives to gather the bishops of the Communion and seeks to be a faithful shepherd.

Please pray for the National House of Bishops as we gather this week, and pray for the College of Bishops as we uphold each other, and seek to be found faithful by the Good Shepherd on the last day.

Yours in Christ,

The College of Bishops

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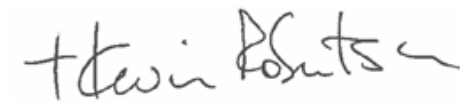
The Rt. Rev. Andrew Asbil

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The Rt. Rev. Peter Fenty

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The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw

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The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Jenny Andison".

The Rt. Rev. Jenny Andison