

Discernment on Sexuality General Synod 2010

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.