

## **History of Statements and Resolutions about Homosexuality Anglican Church of Canada General Synod and House of Bishops**

### **A. Source: ANS / 1978 February 3 / Press release**

TEXT: Toronto - Friday, Feb. 3, 1978

Open discussion and debate, often highly emotional, on the life and rights of homosexual persons in society, have become common-place and divisive [sic for divisive] in recent years.

The members of the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, as chief pastors of the Church are obligated to exercise faithfully witness to that office, and at the same time, to wrestle with the human and pastoral problems which homosexuality presents to the Church at all levels as it attempts to minister to all people.

Realizing the complexity of this area of human relationships and the wide divergence of both popular and informed opinion, the Bishops, in the summer of 1976, asked for help and advice in facing the problems raised by homosexuality in contemporary society. They commissioned a Task Force of eleven persons, from a variety of backgrounds to assist in their deliberations.

The Task Force presented the first draft of its report in 1977 and was asked to do further work in some areas and report back to the meeting of the Bishops early in 1978. The House of Bishops has been meeting this past week in Mississauga and has received the second draft of the report.

The lengthy draft is still considered confidential as it was prepared as an advisory paper to the Bishops, not a position paper for the whole Church. The Bishops have committed themselves to continuing the study of this vital issue and specifically of the report's 15 recommendations. They will continue their deliberations at future meetings of the House. They have asked that a study paper be prepared in the near future for study and discussion at all levels of the Church, and by other interested groups. In the meantime, the Bishops have issued the following specific statement:

"Questions of human sexuality are a matter of great concern to the Church of our day. Prominent amongst these concerns is the attitude of the Church towards homosexual persons. While homosexuality is a very complex and involved issue, nevertheless, in response to specific questions directed to the Anglican Church of Canada, we have decided that a statement is needed at this time.

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."

**B. Source: HB / 1979 February 5 - 7 / Resolution**

PRIMATE'S COMMISSION ON SEXUALITY

Resolution of the House of Bishops:

- "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."

**C. Source: NEC / 1990 November / Resolution 36-11-90**

HUMAN SEXUALITY/HOMOSEXUAL ORIENTATION

That this National Executive Council request the House of Bishops to update its 1979 Statements on human sexuality and ordination of persons of homosexual orientation.

**D. Source: GS / 1992 June 18-26 / Act 111**

SEXUALITY

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.

**E. Source: HB / 1992 November 9-13 / Resolution**

**SEXUALITY**

The House of Bishops adopted the following statement:

**REPORT FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS November, 1992**

We have committed ourselves to a process of study on issues of human sexuality generally, and homosexuality specifically. It is appropriate at this point that we say something to the Church about where we are, and what lies ahead.

**OUR PROCESS OF STUDY**

We began our discussions in November of 1991. In June of this year we undertook an exploration of our personal feelings and starting points around the many issues related to sexuality. We also spent several hours hearing from, and engaging in dialogue with, Dr. Donald Meen, an active Anglican, clinical psychologist, and member of Integrity Vancouver. (Subsequently, Dr. Meen was a panelist in General Synod's forum on homosexuality.)

Now, at our November, 1992 meeting, we have spent two days in discussion and study based on the booklet "Issues in Human Sexuality : A Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England." This statement provides a broad overview of many issues involving scripture, sexuality and homosexuality and, while we were not always in agreement with it, we found it a useful way of focussing our discussion.

A year earlier, we had suggested that bishops should seek opportunities in their own situations to engage in dialogue with members of the homosexual community. From the nature of our discussions, it was clear that many had done so.

In the Spring of 1993, we will discuss the nature and role of episcopal guidelines in our church, and our commitment to them.

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.

In the Spring of 1994 we will review and evaluate the 1979 guidelines.

**OTHER STUDIES**

During this same period, other explorations will be underway. The 1992 General Synod requested that we, with the National Executive Council, "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,

and the experience of gays and lesbians who are committed Christians; and that the study be completed and a report with specific recommendations be submitted to General Synod 1995, in a form that would be available to the whole church."

We see this as a helpful broadening of the conversation. There are some aspects of human sexuality issues for which we, as bishops, must exercise responsibility; and there are some for which the Church as a whole must come to a common mind. In either case, we are aware that we embody only some voices, and we look forward to participating in the wider discussion where, we hope, all voices will be represented.

#### WHAT NEXT ?

We do not know what will emerge at the end of this process. It is clear that we, like the rest of the Church, embrace a variety of convictions. We are genuinely struggling to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. We expect we will continue to find this a subject that requires deep personal struggle, rigorous biblical study, and respectful engagement with those whose views differ from our own.

We are profoundly aware that this subject carries enormous importance for many church members. Equally, we know that our deliberations, and those of the larger church, are a source of concern, and even of anguish, for some.

Our commitment is to continue the study; to listen intently to voices across the church; to probe the scriptures; and to discern, as fully and as honestly as we can, the path of faithfulness.

#### **F. Source: GS / 1995 June 1-9 / Act 57**

##### AFFIRM PRESENCE OF GAY/LESBIAN CHRISTIANS IN LIFE OF THE CHURCH

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.

#### **G. Source: GS / 1995 June 1-9 / Act 58**

##### CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

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.

**H. Source: GS / 1995 June 1-9 / Act 59**

PRIMATE'S ROLE RE ONGOING DIALOGUE

That this General Synod request that the Primate continue to encourage dialogue on "homosexuality and homosexual relationships" throughout the church.

**I. Source: GS / 1995 June 1-9 / Act 102**

RECOGNITION OF COMMITTED MONOGAMOUS SAME-GENDER UNION

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.

**J. Source: HB / 1996 April 26 - May 3 / Resolution**

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The following resolution was adopted:

That the House of Bishops support the legislation before the House of Commons to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The House then issued the following statement:

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada has today sent a message to the House of Commons in support of the Human Rights Act. This is based on the church's belief that all persons are created in the image of God, and that Christ died for all. This statement is consistent with the existing policy of the Canadian House of Bishops since 1979, reaffirmed by the General Synod in 1995, that condemns bigotry, violence and hatred directed towards anyone due to their sexual orientation.

We wish to make it clear to the church that this action does not change the current status of the 1979 statement with respect to the ordination of homosexual persons. This continues to be a matter of discussion and theological reflection within the House, as within the church at large. No change of doctrine and discipline is being implied. Rather the Gospel imperative of love, compassion and justice is being upheld which continues to be the call of every Christian.

**K. Source: CGS / 1997 May 9-12 / Resolution 20-05-97**

REPORT OF THE FAITH WORSHIP AND MINISTRY COMMITTEE -  
SEXUALITY

That the Council of the General Synod invite the dioceses to expand and deepen the dialogue concerning human sexuality through the establishment of a

Commission in each diocese or group of dioceses with the following mandate:

1. To establish a forum where conversation on human sexuality can be carried on in an atmosphere of trust and respect.
2. To represent the diversity of attitude within the Church.
3. To consider the full range of expressions of human sexuality in relationship and the church's response to those expressions.
4. To receive and respond to materials for study in this area and, where possible, to use local expertise and produce resources which could be shared with the wider church.
5. To forward the name of a contact person (or persons) to the FWMC by November 1, 1997, and subsequently forward any responses or new materials which the Commission wishes to share.

**L. Source: ANS / 1997 October 30 / Press release**

**HUMAN SEXUALITY : A STATEMENT BY THE ANGLICAN BISHOPS OF CANADA – 1997**

The House of Bishops adopted the following statement:

Human sexuality : A statement by the Anglican Bishops of Canada - 1997

The Background

In 1976 the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada sought advice as it faced the issue of homosexuality in contemporary society and how the church ought to relate pastorally, and in terms of ordination. A task force presented a lengthy report to the bishops.

By 1979 the bishops had committed themselves to further study and they requested the preparation of study materials to help further discussion at all levels of the church. These materials were published in 1985.

In 1979, as an interim measure, the bishops issued a statement based on the following belief:

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.

As well, the Bishops issued a four point pastoral guideline for themselves as they considered the admission of individual persons to the church's ordained ministry.

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;
4. We will not call into 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.

In referring to this guideline in the press, Archbishop Scott, Primate of the

Anglican Church of Canada at that time said,  
Our statement is not meant to be, in any way, legislation or a final doctrinal statement. It is a pastoral statement and we intend it to assist us in the exercise of our pastoral ministry within the Church.

The house held a number of study sessions on the topic of human sexuality through the 1980's. In 1991 a new task force was constituted by the Primate.

At the General Synod of 1992 a major block of time was devoted to an open forum on the topic. More materials were made available for study and by 1994/95 approximately 170 groups and 2500 people had used the study guide "Hearing Diverse Voices, Seeking Common Ground".

At the 1995 General Synod, an important report was presented, following a hearing, which lead to a motion being presented and strongly supported which:

Affirmed the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the church and condemned bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation.

This report recommended among other things, that the process of dialogue continue; that all of us should, "learn and reflect more about our sexuality as a whole," and that the dialogue should be extended so that the, "whole church family has an opportunity to be involved". The Faith Worship and Ministry Committee of the ACC was given a mandate to provide leadership to the church to ensure a continuation of the dialogue.

All of this effort has fostered a greater understanding of what it is to be a gay man or lesbian in the church and a heightened sense of pastoral concern on the part of the church. Also, as gay men and lesbians have found greater acceptance in the church, they have been enabled to share their experiences in a more public way to the benefit of the whole church which has become increasingly aware of the breadth and depth of their contribution.

At its April 1997 meeting, discussing this topic for the first time in open session, the House of Bishops continued its deliberations and requested the task force to redraft the 1979 guideline in the light of new pastoral awareness while at the same time retaining the original intent of the guideline. In undertaking this task we seek to articulate how far we have come, as well as to acknowledge those areas where continued study and dialogue is necessary. Theological reflection and pastoral action in the Church since 1979 have focused on four key areas, and it is these that shape our considerations in this statement. The church has reflected on the place of gay and lesbian persons in society; the place of gay and lesbian persons in the church; the significance of committed sexually active relationships between people of the same sex and the significance of such relationships for ordination of gay and lesbian persons.

Gay and Lesbian Persons in Society

As Christians we believe that homosexual persons are created in the image and likeness of God and have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, concern and care of the church. As an expression of this love and care, the gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to oppose all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.

It is on the basis of these theological insights, which remain pertinent irrespective of any considerations of the appropriateness or otherwise of homosexual acts, that the Anglican Church of Canada has affirmed that gay and lesbian persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens. Thus, this House supported the passage of bill C-33 that made sexual orientation a prohibited ground for discrimination under the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. We call upon the church and all its members to continue to work to safeguard the freedom, dignity and responsibility of every person and to seek an end to discrimination.

#### Gay and Lesbian Persons in the Church

We are thankful to see a new sensitivity emerging towards gay and lesbian persons in the Church. No longer can we talk in the abstract. We are experiencing a growing awareness that the persons of whom we speak are among us. They are our sons and daughters. They are our friends and relatives. This recognition has not always been present. The story of the Church's attitude to gay and lesbian people has too often been one of standing at a distance, even of prejudice, ignorance and oppression. All of us need to acknowledge this, and to repent for any part we may have had in creating it.

In our baptism we covenant to seek and to serve Christ in all persons. We now call the church to reaffirm the mutuality of that covenant, a covenant that encourages and enables us to love others as Christ loves us. This covenant will no longer allow us to regard those among us whose orientation is homosexual simply as "needy objects" for pastoral care. Instead we are partners, celebrating together the dignity of every human being, and reaching out together for the wholeness offered to us in the Gospel.

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.

#### Ordination of Gay and Lesbian Persons

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.

#### Conclusion

Our discussions over the past few years have taught us much. We do not have a common mind on all things. We see in part and we know in part. Where we disagree we need to continue to read the scriptures together and to engage in dialogue, that we might listen for what the Spirit is saying to the Church today.

**M. Source: GS / 1998 May 21-29 / Act 84**

HOUSE OF BISHOPS GUIDELINES ON ORDINATION OF GAY AND

## LESBIAN PERSONS AND THE BLESSING OF COVENANTED RELATIONSHIPS

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.

### **N. Source: CGS / 1998 November 16-18 / Resolution 09-11-98**

#### BIGOTRY AND HATRED OF GAYS AND LESBIANS

That the Council of General Synod:

- a) make public its reaffirmation of the motion adopted at the 1995 General Synod "affirming the presence and contributions of gay men and lesbians in the life of the Church and condemning bigotry, violence and hatred directed toward any due to their sexual orientation"; and
- b) request the dioceses to monitor the situations in their jurisdictions and seek to find ways to contribute to an atmosphere of respect and a reduction of violence based on bigotry and hatred.

### **O. Source: HB / 2002 October 25-29 / Resolution HB-02-10-08**

#### MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

The House of Bishops approved the following message:

A Message to the Church

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, meeting in Mississauga on October 28, 2002, issues the following statement in response to the decision of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster to bless same-sex unions.

We are called to be one in the Body of Christ (John 17:21). We know that on the issue of same-sex unions differing convictions are deeply held in the House of Bishops, throughout our church and beyond. The decision of New Westminster has caused pain for some and joy in others. Over the past four years this Diocese undertook an extensive process of study that has led them to their decision. We recognize that members of the diocese on every side of the issue have suffered pain.

Eight parishes of the Diocese of New Westminster have requested alternative Episcopal oversight for themselves. Before the fracture widens we urge all involved to engage in a process of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18) on the basis of the general principles passed by the Diocesan Synod in June 2002. Although the precise terms of the conversation will be established within the Diocese we propose that the following elements should be part of it.

1. The conversation should be enabled by a mutually agreed to facilitator.
2. The process should provide 'safety' for all participants by setting at least these standards:
  - a. Being respectful of each other's faith journey.
  - b. Listening respectfully.
  - c. Asking 'inviting' questions.
  - d. Attempting to understand from the view points of others.

We request that those outside the diocese respect the integrity of this process and allow it to proceed without intervention.

In recent years some dioceses in the Anglican Church of Canada have made individual decisions to recognize or forbid, and in this one instance, to bless same-sex unions. We have spent much of our time at these meetings discussing our response to these situations. We are unable to speak with a unanimous voice on this issue of national concern especially with regard to the subject of homosexuality in the light of scripture. We are referring the matter of the blessing of same-sex unions to our national governing body, the General Synod (2004) for discussion and if possible, resolution.

We agree that we will not make individual decisions in any additional dioceses during the interim. Until the time of resolution all bishops are asked to uphold the 1997 Guidelines of the House of Bishops on Human Sexuality.

We call the church to prayer in this difficult and demanding time in our life in Christ.

**P. Source: ANS / 2003 November 3 / Press release**

**ANGLICAN BISHOPS STRUGGLE WITH DISSENT**

The House of Bishops adopted two resolutions:

First Motion:

"That in response to the 'Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion' (October 16, 2003) the Primate be asked to establish a task force of the House of Bishops to draw up terms and conditions for 'adequate provision for Episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities' in the Anglican Church of Canada, to consult through the Primate 'with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates', and to report to the April 2004 meeting of the House of Bishops."

Second Motion:

That this House, to enable the work of the Task Force on Episcopal Oversight for Dissenting Minorities,

1. Request that the Bishop of Yukon refrain from exercising Episcopal ministry in the Diocese of New Westminster;
2. Request that the Metropolitan of British Columbia and Yukon stay proceedings against the Bishop of Yukon;
3. Request that the Bishop of New Westminster seek a stay of proceedings against the priests of his diocese against whom such proceedings have been initiated;
4. That a mediator be appointed by the Task Force to negotiate an interim role for the person exercising Episcopal oversight mutually acceptable to the diocesan Bishop and the dissenting parishes.

**Q. Source: GS / 2004 May 28 - June 4 / Act 37**

**BLESSING OF SAME SEX UNIONS**

The following resolution was adopted by General Synod:

Be it resolved that this General Synod:

- 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.

**R. Source: GS / 2004 May 28 - June 4 / Act 38**

**BLESSING OF SAME SEX UNIONS - RESOURCES FOR THE CHURCH**

The following resolution was adopted:

That this General Synod request the Faith, Worship and Ministry Committee in the next triennium to prepare resources for the church to use in addressing issues relating to humans sexuality, including the blessing of same sex unions and the changing definition of marriage in society.

## **S. Source Faith Worship and Ministry Report to General Synod, Appendix I**

Statement of the House of Bishops, October 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

**T. Source: ANS Press Release/May 01, 2007**

**Statement from the House of Bishops to the Members of General Synod**

Pursuant to section 25 a) of the Constitution of the General Synod the Primate gives notice that the House of Bishops desires to submit to the Anglican Church of Canada General Synod 2007 the following statement which is concurred in by the House of Bishops:

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, meeting from April 16-20, 2007, once again discussed the question of the blessing of same-sex unions. Once again a number of diverse opinions were expressed. Again questions were raised about theology, scripture, discipline, and our church's constitution. However we did find a common strong concern for the pastoral care of all members of our church. While not all bishops can conceive of condoning or blessing same-sex unions, we believe it is not only appropriate but a Gospel imperative to pray with the whole people of God, no matter their circumstance. In so doing we convey the long-standing Gospel teaching that God in Christ loves each person and indeed loves him/her so much that Christ is calling each person to change and grow more fully into God's image and likeness. To refuse to pray with any person or people is to suggest God is not with them. All of us fall short of the glory of God but all are loved by God in Christ Jesus. We believe that in offering the sacraments we invite God's transformative action in people's lives.

- We certainly hope no child is denied baptism solely on the basis of the sexual orientation, or the marital status, of the parents. It is inconsistent and unacceptable to deny baptism to children as a way of imposing discipline on the sexual behaviour of the parents.
- We hope no baptized Christian will be denied communion or confirmation because of being in a committed homosexual relationship or because of their marital status.

We are committed, as bishops in Canada, to develop the most generous pastoral response possible within the current teaching of the church. We offer the following examples of possible pastoral responses:

- When a civilly married gay or lesbian couple seeks our church's reception of their civil marriage and asks their parish's recognition, it may be possible, with their

bishop's knowledge and permission, to celebrate a Eucharist with the couple, including appropriate intercessory prayers, but not including a nuptial blessing.

- When a gay or lesbian married or committed couple seeks to hold a reception or celebration in a church for their life in Christ, again intercessory prayers for their mutual fidelity, the deepening of their discipleship and for their baptismal ministry may be offered, not including the exchange of vows and/or a nuptial blessing.

To the gay and lesbian licensed clergy of our church, we again affirm your ministry as deeply valued and appreciated, and we acknowledge the pain and conflict that many of you live with daily in your ministry in Christ.

To those who experience these pastoral statements and possible pastoral provisions as inadequate or insufficient, we recognize that they are less than the blessing of same-sex unions or marriage. However it is the discernment of the majority of the House of Bishops that as of today the doctrine and discipline of our church does not clearly permit further action, although we acknowledge that General Synod 2007 will vote on several resolutions on the blessing of same-sex unions.

To those who fear that these pastoral provisions have gone too far, we assert that this discipline is entirely consistent with the doctrine of the Church and with our membership in the Anglican Communion, and fits within the pastoral guidelines of the Windsor Report (paragraph 143). We call upon every member of the Anglican Church of Canada to continue in their faithful discipleship and the work of theological and scriptural reflection and dialogue. We are each called to participate in God's mission in the world and we believe we will do this by the grace of the Risen Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Looking ahead, we ask the Primate and General Synod for a report on:

1. The theological question whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine (St. Michael Report)
2. The implications of the blessing of same-sex unions and /or marriage for our church and the Communion (The Windsor Report)
3. Scripture's witness to the integrity of every human person and the question of the sanctity of human relationships.

We ask that this report be available in advance of General Synod 2010.

We commit to taking this ongoing conversation to the Lambeth Conference 2008.

#### **U. Source: Gs/2007 June 19-25/Act 33**

#### **St. Michael Report**

That this General Synod accept the conclusion of the Primate's Theological Commission's *St. Michael Report* that the blessing of same-sex unions is a

matter of doctrine, but is not core doctrine in the sense of being credal and should not be a communion breaking issue.

**V. Source GS/2007 June 19-25/Act 42, Act 43**

**Blessing of Same Sex Unions – Core Doctrine of the ACC**

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 credal) of The Anglican Church of Canada.

**Blessing of Same Sex Unions – Diocesan Authority and Jurisdiction**

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. **Defeated**

**W. Source GS/2007 June 19-25/Act 44**

**Revision of Canon on Marriage**

That this General Synod request the Council of General Synod to consider a revision of Canon XXI (On Marriage) including theological rationale to allow marriage of all legally qualified persons and to report back to General Synod 2010.

**X. Source GS/2007 June 19-25/Act 45**

**House of Bishops Statement on Pastoral Care of Same Sex Couples**

That this General Synod 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.

**Y. Source GS 2007/June 19-25/Act 61**

That in light of the statement of the House of Bishops to members of General Synod, dated April 30, 2007, this General Synod 2007:

1. 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:

- the theological question whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of Christian doctrine;
  - 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.