

**Statement to the Council of General Synod
From the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee
October, 2003**

Introduction

Part of the mandate of the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee, given to it by the General Synod of 1995, is to ‘promote theological reflection, and provide resources and education on issues of doctrine, ethics, ministry, ecumenism, leadership, evangelism and mission’. For over 25 years, Faith Worship and Ministry and its predecessor bodies, have been reflecting, along with many other topics, on issues relating to human sexuality, and have taken responsibility to engage the wider Canadian church in study concerning these matters.

In November, 2002, the Council of General Synod, acting on a request from the House of Bishops, requested the Faith Worship and Ministry Committee to consult with the General Synod Planning Committee and the House of Bishops to ensure that the matter of the blessings of same sex unions be brought before General Synod 2004.

The current policy of the Anglican Church of Canada with respect to issues of homosexuality, is embodied in two resolutions of General Synod. In 1995, General Synod resolved that it ‘affirms ‘the presence 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’. In 1998, it resolved that it ‘commend the House of Bishops for its statement Human Sexuality issued on October 29, 1997, and acknowledges the need for continuing study and dialogue’.

In preparation for the discussion at General Synod, we offer the following resources and reflections for the consideration of the Council of General Synod and the Anglican Church of Canada.

Resources Already Available

The following resources prepared by Canadian Anglicans accompany this statement:

- Mission Statement of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada
- 1997 Statement on Human Sexuality by the House of Bishops
- A Report from FWM on its discussion of issues facing the ACC with some recommendations (October, 2002)
- Task Force on Jurisdiction Report
- A paper by the Chancellor of General Synod, Ron Stevenson, “An Anglican Understanding of Authority”

The following resources are available for purchase through the Anglican Book Centre or in diocesan resource centres:

- “Hearing Diverse Voices; Seeking Common Ground” (1995 study)

- Written on the Heart: The Bible for Anglicans in the 21st Century (Anglican Video)

Other resources are available from some dioceses.

A further resource to the church will be the work of Linda Graff and Associates, whom the Council agreed to engage in focus group research on what Canadian Anglicans value and hope for in this deliberations. This material will be shared with the Council in March, 2004, and will assist in the process of identifying the question(s) and process(es) to come before General Synod.

Emerging Realities

In the course of our reflections, the committee identified the following emerging realities. In them we are reminded of the Anglican Church's remarkable ability to comprehend diversity held in a dynamic tension, and of the theological truth that this is God's Church, sustained by God's Word and Sacrament.

- Recognition that there are deeply held convictions along the spectrum of diversity
- Recognition that for some who hold these convictions division is not inevitable
- Recognition that the hope of unity is not achievable without ongoing dialogue
- Recognition that fruitful dialogue occurs under the principles of faithful conversation
- Recognition that for some this is an issue of order, not faith; for others, this issue threatens our commitment to the 'historic faith'
- Recognition that this is not the only urgent issue we face as a church
- Recognition that we have a responsibility to be a 'mission' church
- Recognition that this issue represents a spectrum of voices and concerns that needs to be carefully heard, rather than a two-sided, either/or, conversation
- Recognition that many indigenous people have requested more time to consider these matters
- Recognition that recent court decisions in several jurisdictions have heightened the confusion for many between 'blessing of same-sex unions' and 'marriage'
- Recognition that there are significant pastoral implications surrounding this issue and the manner in which it is discussed

We believe the conversation about the blessing of same sex unions should proceed prayerfully and thoughtfully within our own Canadian church. We recognize that there are also diverse voices within the wider Communion and among our ecumenical partners who can inform us from a wide range of theological and cultural perspectives; however, it is important that conversation happens in a way that allows us first and foremost to hear unimpeded from the breadth of our own membership. We continue to ask for the prayers of all Christians as we engage in this process.