



Living God's Blessing

An Open Letter to General Synod

January 2007

Anglicans of homosexual orientation have formally, by episcopal decision, been accepted as equal members of the Anglican Church of Canada since 1979. However, that acceptance did not include accepting any form of sexual expression for homosexual persons, who therefore have never been treated as equal, embodied persons. Though celibacy is understood in scripture to be a vocation (Matt. 19:12), it has been imposed on gays and lesbians, making it not vocation but compulsion, and denying them any sanctioned form of sexual intimacy.

The affirmation in 2004 by General Synod, the church's highest governing body, of "the sanctity and integrity of committed, adult same-sex relationships" was a step towards real equality. However, since then, there has been a moratorium on further use of blessings outside New Westminster. In the face of the growing split in the Anglican Communion, General Synod 2004 referred the question of blessing same-sex relationships to the Primate's Theological Commission. Its *St. Michael Report* has recommended that such blessings are a question of doctrine, but not of core doctrine. This means that General Synod will be able, in 2007, to affirm the blessing of same-sex relationships.

We believe that:

1. Silence contributes to the injustices experienced by gays and lesbians.
2. Truth, love and justice are biblical imperatives not to be jeopardized by clamours for unanimity disguised as "unity". Unity in Christ, proclaimed as Lord, requires truth and justice for all.
3. We have the obligation to use reason to interpret scripture in the light of new knowledge and understandings.
4. It is unbiblical, unjust, ethically wrong, and morally unsound to impose celibacy on gay and lesbian clergy.
5. Because the core of the gospel message is covenant with God, with family, and with community, the covenants between same-sex couples should be affirmed and blessed by the church, as is the case for heterosexual couples.

The church has acknowledged the sanctity and integrity of adult committed same-sex relationships. Civil marriage for same-sex couples is now the norm in Canada. Thus it is time for the church to accept as valid all marriages performed in Canada, and to bless the marriages and unions of all who request such a blessing. This can happen while the discussion continues about the possibility of the solemnization of same-sex marriages in the church.

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