

STATEMENT FROM A GROUP OF BISHOPS

June 03 2004

To the Anglican Church of Canada:

We write to you from the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada meeting at St. Catharines, Ontario.

In recent days the Synod has made a number of contradictory decisions which may be causing confusion in the Church. On the one hand, the Synod has deferred a decision concerning the blessing of same sex unions for three years in order to explore whether such ceremonies would be a matter of doctrine. This consideration will need to be engaged by all 34 synods of the Anglican Church of Canada. On the other hand the Synod appears to have preempted this work by summarily expressing the opinion that it affirms the "sanctity" of committed adult same sex relationships.

We regret that it also ignores the work of the Lambeth Commission for Anglican Provinces not to take any action on these matters before the release of their report.

Faithful gay and lesbian members of our Church, who are themselves deeply divided on these questions, have a right to expect the Church to respond to their request for theological guidance with respect to their relationships with the utmost theological and pastoral integrity. We believe that General Synod failed to meet that challenge.

We must point out that General Synod's opinion is in error and contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the tradition of the undivided Church, the clearly expressed conviction of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference of 1998, the overwhelming ecumenical consensus of the Church inside Canada and abroad, and the 1997 Guidelines of our own House of Bishops.

We urge Anglicans across Canada distressed by this expression of opinion not to despair and urge them to take their full part in the diocesan and provincial synods which will contribute to a decision of whether this is a doctrinal matter.

We express our sorrow particularly to the Inuit and Indigenous churches whose representatives spoke clearly to the Synod but whose voices were ignored. We express our appreciation to the Bishops and people and churches of the Global South who have implored our Church unsuccessfully to abide by the mind of the Communion. We express our appreciation to all the people in the congregations of the ACiNW, and assure them of our on-going support, and full recognition.

Many of us will take comfort in the Article of Religion (XXI) which reminds us that Councils of the Church often fall short in their seeking God's will. We are told in that Article that in many Councils of the Church, there has been much error, "even in things pertaining unto God." The point of this teaching of our Church is to give us confidence that when the Church acts unwisely it is still the Body of Christ. We invite all Anglicans to continue to uphold the teachings of the Anglican Church worldwide which stands unchanged.

If we are faithful to our Lord's call to the costly love that alone can sustain us in our common life, then the world, whatever else it sees, will see the love of Jesus at work in our frailty and imperfection and find hope for its own future.