

A sermon preached at St. George's Anglican Church Calgary, by the Rev. Clara King, July 17, 2016.

Proper 16 – Year C

Psalm 15

Luke 10:38-42

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts, be always acceptable in Your sight, O Lord our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Most of you will be aware by now of the events that took place early this week at General Synod. The first of two votes to amend the marriage canon to include same sex marriage passed with a 2/3 majority in all three houses. The statement by our own Bishop, Archbishop Greg was emailed out earlier this week, and there are copies available in the Narthex for those who do not have email.

I'd like to read to you the statement by our Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, which he entitled "Forbearing one another in love":

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"Forbearing one another in love"

BY [FRED HILTZ, ARCHBISHOP AND PRIMATE](#) ON JULY 14, 2016

In light of decisions made at General Synod 2016 concerning the solemnizing of same-sex marriage, I pray our Church can and will take to heart Paul's plea with the Christians living in Ephesus, "I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Going into General Synod, the delegates knew there would be pastoral implications whether the Resolution to amend the Marriage Canon passed or not. In order to pass it would, according to the Declaration of Principles (General Synod Handbook), require a two-thirds majority in each of the three orders voting: bishops, clergy, and laity.

On Monday, July 11 the result of the vote was that in the orders of bishops and laity there was the required two-thirds majority but not in the order of clergy. The vote was very close. The pastoral implication was that LGBTQ2S persons and those who have accompanied them were disappointed and saddened. Many wept. The Synod sat in silence.

Because the vote was so very close, on Tuesday morning there was a request that the record of this vote be made public and Synod concurred. Analysis of the actual vote revealed that one clergy member's vote was not properly recorded. The Chancellor then advised the Synod that according to the numbers we in fact did have a two-thirds majority vote in the order of clergy, and I announced the resolution had therefore passed in all three orders. The pastoral implication was that a number of members of Synod were disappointed and saddened. Many wept. The Synod sat in silence.

We have been deeply divided over the solemnizing of same-sex marriage for a very long time. That has not changed. In the midst of this division, I need to take to heart Paul's counsel and I encourage our whole Church to do the same. "Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called," writes St. Paul. He reminds us of our fellowship in Christ Jesus, through our baptism, and in the eucharist. He reminds us that we are "the Body of Christ, members one of another", and that we in fact need each other, and need to find ways to make room for one another.

In keeping with the theme of Synod, "You are my witnesses" the question with which we must now wrestle is this, "For what kind of pastoral and prophetic witness can and will we be known?"

I pray that witness not be marred by fraction and breaking of communion with one another, but rather that "forbearing of one another in love" that "eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". More than ever we must make efforts not to turn away from one another but rather to one another, not to ignore but to recognize one another, not to walk apart but together. We need as a Church to work hard at maintaining our communion in Christ, for in his reconciling love is our hope and our life.

The Synod passed on first reading an amendment to the Marriage Canon to allow for same-sex marriage in our Church. Because it is a Canon about doctrine, consideration of the matter is required in “two successive sessions of the General Synod”. So the matter will be before the General Synod in 2019. In the meantime, it is referred “for consideration to diocesan and provincial Synods”.

I call the Church to seize this opportunity. I commend the General Synod’s reaffirmation by resolution of the 2004 General Synod Statement on the integrity and sanctity of same-sex relationships, and its call for a much wider and deeper engagement with the report, “This Holy Estate”. I will ask the Council of General Synod (CoGS) to give immediate attention to the matter of translation, at least of the executive summary of the report and frequently asked questions. I will ask CoGS to consider what other resources might be helpful. I will be asking the House of Bishops at their fall meeting to consider how we encourage “further consideration” of the matter, and to show strong leadership in their dioceses in hosting events, dialogues, and studies.

In all these conversations I want to encourage much more engagement with people who identify as LGBTQ2S. We have spent a lot of time talking about them. I believe we need to take much more time to talk with them and to learn of their lived experience of covenanted love in relationships that are monogamous and life-long. I know that will require of all of us a good deal of courage and grace.

Finally, I ask that without ceasing, we pray for one another, mindful always of the counsel of Paul.

“I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”  
(Ephesians 4: 1-3)

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the letters 'Dnd' in a cursive, flowing script.



This Sunday, some Anglican Churches across Canada will be weeping, and some Anglican Churches will be rejoicing. But in the vast majority of congregations, there will be both weepers and rejoicers.

Here at St. George's, we have in our midst, people of many different opinions; we are of many different minds. And the question will be: do we make our relationships with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ dependent on our agreement with one another?

I have friends and family members that I disagree with. Sometimes they open their mouths and horrible, embarrassing things come out. But just because, for instance, my father and I don't see eye to eye on global warming doesn't make him any less my father.

Shouldn't it, theoretically, be the same for us as a family in Christ, as brothers and sisters? There will never be a moment when we all agree 100% on every single thing: there will always be things we will disagree about. As the ethnic diversity of our country advances, and as people around the world become more polarized, there will be more and more things we disagree about. So we can try to cleanse our congregations of those we disagree with, *or we can learn some of the lessons from the early Church*, from the mighty struggles of the Apostles to stitch together all kinds of different people into a single community.

The early Church was full of people who were divided from one another: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, educated and illiterate – there were impassable barriers between them! And in Christ, they were called to transgress all those boundaries. They were brought together into a single community, a single faith, a single family by the reconciling love of Jesus Christ, by the unity we find in him.

It was a challenge then, and it will be a challenge now. The question is, *do we believe that Christ is able to transform our lives?*

I believe he is. I believe Christ is at work here in our midst, calling us, challenging us, convicting us to grow in love. I believe that Christ has a vision for the Church – not a prediction, not a specific plan, but a vision for the very best that we can be. I believe that Christ has a purpose for us, as the Church, as the Body of Christ, as Canadian Anglicans, and as the people of St. George here in

the North East, and I believe he is revealing it as a lamp unto our feet: just one step at a time.

I believe that he is renewing the Church for a new generation and for a new time when we will need Church more than ever: when we will need practices that teach us how to forbear with one another, across an ever increasing landscape of divisions and trenches; when we will need practices that guide and steady us in a world of ever increasing fast paced change; when we will need saints and heroes in faith who show us how to remain human and compassionate as the violence in the world increases; when we will need a vision of justice, and peace and a common good that we can work towards.

And I believe that every lesson we learn now will help us on our journey. Every lesson we learn now about how to bear with one another in love – a strong love, not a weak flimsy love where we pretend that everything is okay, but a strong love by which we overcome our differences and commit to a vision of the future – every lesson we learn now about how to do that will help us in the days to come, when every day there is a new report of violence in the world. Every lesson will help us in the months to come, as the possibility for war and revolution and the rise of dictators increases. Every lesson will help us in the years to come – whatever terrifying thing might happen, and as the generational tide of the church changes. Every lesson we can learn about how to be a family will help us persevere, and be resilient, and find our triumph through Christ.

They say that history happens one day at a time: so today, right now, here in this service, let us make our choice for what future we will help bring into being. Let us choose now to renew our commitments to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us choose to love one another as we love ourselves. Let us practice our faith, and by our words and actions, become the Church that Christ envisions.

**Amen.**