The Anglican Diocese of Calgary

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To the People of the Diocese of Calgary

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In my last pastoral letter to you I asked you to pray for the meeting of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC) and for our delegates to that gathering which convened in Toronto on July 7th and ran until July 13th. I want to first thank you for your prayers. They were helpful and reassuring in what was at times a positive and hopeful, but also often a complex, intense and difficult meeting. Second, I would like to thank our delegates, Sara, Carol, Rene, Stephen, Jane, Pilar and James for their faithful, prayerful and thoughtful representation of our diocese. Their participation and committed engagement through what was an often complicated and difficult event was exemplary. They did us proud.

While I do not intend to go into detail on all of what went on at General Synod 2016, there were several important decisions made.

1. In 2001 our General Synod enacted "A New Agape" – a document outlining a new way of relating with our Indigenous sisters and brothers leading to self-determination for an Indigenous led and governed church within the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC). This General Synod took another step in the establishment of a fifth province within the ACoC. This would embody and animate ministry characterized by Indigenous ways of working and being.
2. General Synod also approved a document on the work and ministry of deacons, including competency grids. Diaconal ministry has been in renewal for some years. It is a vital part of the Church's life in carrying out a witnessing to the values of God's kingdom through loving service.
3. Ecumenical dialogue with the United Church, which was restarted over ten years ago, was affirmed, and a new ecumenical dialogue with the Mennonite Church was approved.
4. We passed two important motions from Public Witness for Social and Ecological Justice Coordinating Committee. The first enables the General Synod of the ACoC to become a signatory to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investing. The second gives direction for the review of General Synod investments. This would ensure those investments would reflect the church's understanding of social and environmental responsibilities. It would also bring them in line with the promotion of a low carbon economy.
5. Finally, the first of two votes was taken to amend the marriage canon, which would allow Same Sex Marriage to be part of the canon's definition of marriage. This was the "first reading", which passed. It now sends the amendment out to dioceses and provinces for study, review and comment in advance of a second vote in 2019 which would then bring it into effect.

Many of you will have heard or seen news of the development on the marriage canon and will know that it was a difficult and messy debate and process. On Monday, after roughly five hours of debate, a vote was taken and the motion was declared to have failed by one vote. Many people were grieved and deeply hurt by that result. On the next day that decision was overturned, leading to others being deeply hurt and grieved by the result. For many of us, the

process leading up to the synod and the way the decision unfolded was difficult and very troubling. It is clear from this experience that the church needs to find better, more Gospel centred ways to work through difficult issues together in a way that does not pit brothers and sisters in Christ against one another in an adversarial environment. It is also clear that the church has great need to better live out Christian community and to welcome and care for those who are hurting and feel rejected and unloved. The gospel imperative calls us to do so. We are also called to give ourselves to Jesus as disciples, sacrificing ourselves to live His way. The love of Jesus not only welcomes us, but also transforms us and calls us to be conformed to the Gospel.

As I mentioned above, after this first vote on the amendment the matter is referred to dioceses and provinces for study and comment. In the Diocese of Calgary we have already begun a Generous Listening process of discernment on the issue of Same Sex Blessings, much of which is also applicable to the Same Sex Marriage discussion. We will be continuing that process in the coming months. I ask your prayers for the Anglican Church of Canada, for all whose lives are affected by this process and for your sisters and brothers in Christ in this diocese – that we may with prayerfulness and gentleness, compassion and faithfulness engage together and bear witness before our broken world to Christ's love in our midst .

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus…" (Philippians 2:1-11)

In Christ,

The Most Rev'd Greg Kerr-Wilson
Archbishop of Calgary and
Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land