

*Hearken to my voice, O Lord, when I call;  
Have mercy on me and answer me.  
You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face."  
Your face, Lord, will I seek.  
(Psalm 27:10-11)*

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

To: The Clergy and Laity of the Parishes of the Diocese  
From: Bishop Sue and Bishop Ron

General Synod 2010 made many decisions on a variety of topics. On the topic of human sexuality, especially in relation to same-sex relationships, General Synod did not make a decision. So where does that leave us?

**So far in our Diocese . . .**

1. Human Sexuality has not been a divisive topic in our diocese and we hope that it will not become one.
2. Our diocese has honoured the request of the House of Bishops (October 2008) to abide by (until General Synod 2010) the three moratoria requested by the Anglican Communion; i.e. no blessings of same-sex unions, no cross-border interventions by bishops and no ordination of bishops who are living in a same-sex relationship.
3. The General Synod Canon on Marriage (Canon XXI), the Canon that governs marriage in the church in the Anglican Church of Canada, has not been changed, so there still cannot be any weddings of same-sex couples by the clergy of this diocese or in the churches in this diocese.
4. There are many gay and lesbian individuals and couples within our congregations. They participate as valued members of our congregations and also in leadership roles in many ways; e.g. in worship, in music, in church governance.
5. We have had a Listening Group who were asked to facilitate "listening processes" around the diocese. Their work was limited and clearly did not engage the whole diocese. That group is now disbanded. The General Synod statement says, "We are in a time of ongoing discernment which requires mutual accountability through continuing dialogue, diocese to diocese and across the wider church. It also requires continued theological and scriptural study on the wide range of matters relating to human sexuality." We know that some parishes have engaged every study opportunity that has been provided. We also know that some parishes have done no study on this topic. The most recent study guide is called Created in the Image and Likeness of God. You can find it at <http://www.anglican.ca/faith/hs/hsconversations/index.htm>

- If your Region has not done so, we ask that Regional Council undertake organizing a process of listening and study for your particular region to be completed by Synod 2011. If you need resources, please contact the Synod Office.

**As we move into the next year in our Diocese . . .**

1. The General Synod 2010 statement is attached. It recognizes the diversity of views and practices within the Anglican Church of Canada. We have the same diversity within our Diocese from parish to parish, from person to person. Although the Holy Spirit may prove us wrong, we do not believe that we will ever come to “one mind” on questions of sexuality particularly with respect to marriage and ordination.
  - We ask that all of us respect these differences of opinion and value the diversity that challenges us to consider that God’s truth might not be the position you or I currently hold. We ask that we not label or demonize one another. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God.
2. The General Synod statement says, “We acknowledge diverse pastoral practices as dioceses respond to their own missional context. We accept the continuing commitment to develop generous pastoral responses.” It also says, “There can be no imposition of a decision or action, but rather we are challenged to live together sharing in the mission of Christ entrusted to us, accepting that different local contexts call at times for different local discernment, decision and action.” In that regard, each parish and each clergy person must discern their understanding and choose their response (“no imposition of decision or action”).
3. The current agreed standard among the bishops for a “generous pastoral response” is already in place if a parish and the clergy agree to use it.

“When a civilly married gay or lesbian couple seeks our church’s reception of their civil marriage and asks their parish’s recognition, it may be possible, with their bishop’s knowledge and permission, to celebrate a Eucharist with the couple, including appropriate intercessory prayers, but not including a nuptial blessing.

“When a gay or lesbian married couple seeks to hold a reception or celebration in a church for their life in Christ, again intercessory prayers for their mutual fidelity, the deepening of their discipleship and for their baptismal ministry may be offered, not including the exchange of vows and/or a nuptial blessing.”

(House of Bishops, April 20, 2007)

- We ask each parish to decide what kind of pastoral response you will choose to make and advise the Diocesan Bishop of your decision. This will help us to have a sense of “the mind of the diocese” when in discussion at the House of Bishops and when planning for our Synod.
4. Some clergy/parishes may wish to move beyond the current level of pastoral response for blessings or marriages of same-sex couples. If so, a parish discernment process is necessary.
    - We ask that the parish advise the Diocesan Bishop they are in that process of discernment and describe the process undertaken and later advise the Diocesan Bishop of their decision. Again, this will help us to have a sense of “the mind of the diocese” when in discussion at the House of Bishops and when planning for our Synod.
  5. To date our Synod has not been asked to make a legislative decision about the blessing of same-sex civil marriages. It may be that we will not need to do so. For any who may wish to bring forward a resolution for Synod to consider, our Synod will meet May 26 to 29, 2011. Please be in touch with the Executive Secretary of Synod, The Rev’d Janet Hatt, for deadlines.

We hope that this letter will clarify where we are in this diocese. Some of you will think the present situation has gone too far already and others will think it fails to go far enough. We ask that we listen respectfully and lovingly to one another as we move through this time of trying to discern God’s truth about the bounds of acceptable sexual behaviour for Anglican Christians. What is God’s will in this, and how do we bring the church in line with God’s will?

Blessings,



The Right Reverend Sue Moxley  
Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island



The Right Reverend Ron Cutler  
Suffragan Bishop