

The Most Reverend
COLIN R. JOHNSON

Archbishop of Toronto
and Metropolitan of Ontario



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

The Incorporated Synod
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To the Clergy of the Diocese of Toronto

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

I attach the Pastoral Guidelines for the marriage of same-sex couples that I am authorizing for use in specific circumstances in the Diocese of Toronto, effective today. They are, as you will see, provisional, and they are intended to respond to the pastoral needs of our own parishioners until General Synod 2019 considers the matter again.

Six years ago this week, I issued “Pastoral Guidelines for the Blessing of Same-Gender Commitments” in limited situations. This followed from our two decades of discussion in the Diocese and took into account the theological, biblical and political discussions across the wider Church. Some 17 parishes and communities are so authorized now. I will now extend this pastoral provision to include marriage.

The norm for the Church continues to be the marriage of couples of opposite sex. The Anglican Church of Canada is currently in the process of changing this to include same-sex couples.

Until that decision has been finalised, and as an interim pastoral response, as Bishop of Toronto, responsible for the pastoral care and oversight of this Diocese, I will permit selected priests, licensed to the cure of souls in a community, to preside in their parish at the marriage of a same-sex couple in certain specific instances. Both priest and congregation must concur that this ministry will be offered.

Not all will welcome this development: some because it goes too far, some because it is not enough. You will note that there are strong affirmations in these guidelines assuring a continued and honoured place in all aspects of diocesan life for those of you who do not agree with this response. Yours is an authentic, sustainable conviction that is a significant, but not the only, coherent theological, biblical and historical position within our Anglican tradition. All of us need to extend to each the most generous Christian charity that our Redeemer calls us to exercise as we, together, seek to discern and live out God’s will.

No one will be obligated to act against their conscience. Neither parishes nor individual clergy will be required to celebrate marriages contrary to their convictions.

MISSION:

To worship God and proclaim Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and to embody --in word and action-- God’s reconciling love, justice, compassion and liberation--- through which knowledge of God’s reign is extended.

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The next months will require considerable prayer and restraint. The bruising, confusion and pain of General Synod are echoed in our Church and certainly in our diocese. We need to provide the greatest pastoral generosity to each other who will be in very different places, and have been formed in very diverse contexts, theologically, spiritually, scripturally, experientially.

We need to be tender with one another, recognizing in each other the image of God redeemed by our Saviour Jesus Christ, a beloved child, the desire of God's heart and will.

And we need to remember that what unites us is far more central than what divides us: our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and our service together in his mission in the world.

Yours faithfully,

The Most Rev. Colin R. Johnson
Archbishop of Toronto

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