

The Anglican Church of Canada



L'Église anglicane du Canada

Office of the Primate

80 Hayden Street, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 3G2

www.anglican.ca • primate@national.anglican.ca • Tel: (416) 924-9199 ext. 276 • Fax: (416) 924-0211

The Rev. Dr. David Smith  
Anglican Communion Alliance  
P.O. Box 374,  
Brighton, ON K0K 1H0

February 11, 2021

Dear friends in Christ,

Since receiving your letter of December 21, 2020, the Metropolitans and I have reflected and prayed about the opinion and the requests made in it.

We are deeply aware that the discussions of the marriage canon over the past eight years have been difficult and painful for many in our church. Within the life of our Church we have faithful Anglicans in the LGBTQ2SIA community who desire to live in monogamous, committed married relationships. We have bishops who through their theological reflection and consultations believe this is consistent with the gospel. We also have faithful Anglicans who believe that marriage is a sacrament reserved for heterosexual couples only and bishops who believe any departure from this is not consistent with the gospel. We have Indigenous communities who have been misunderstood, stereotyped and abused for perceptions about their worldview and approach to marriage. All have sought to engage in theological reflections consistent with Anglican principles but still remain in apparent paradoxical tension. Despite the desire for clarity we have not yet discerned a resolution to that tension.

The authority for decisions in such matters is a balance between episcopal pastoral authority and the discernment of General Synod. General Synod 2019 did not change the marriage canon. It did however affirm 'A Word to the Church', a statement naming where we find ourselves as a Church in this discernment. This document acknowledges our disagreements and the pain that we have caused one another, summarized in these laments:

*This has been a long season of deep pain for the whole church. We have witnessed disdain and failure of charity toward those who hold differing understandings of marriage:*

*a) toward the LGBTQ2S+ communities;*

*b) toward those who stand in one of the traditions regarding marriage that would lead them to oppose the change;*

c) toward those who stand in one of the traditions regarding marriage that would lead them to favour the change;

d) toward Indigenous persons and communities; and

e) toward those who have proceeded in good faith to authorize rites for same-sex marriage.

*Whatever the actions of the church at this General Synod, we lament the harm that has come to persons and communities in the course of fifty years of conversation, not all of it measured or loving.*

The five affirmations at the end of that document are the voice of the Anglican Church of Canada at this time for our life together:

### **AFFIRMATIONS**

*Council of General Synod asks General Synod and the whole church to make the following affirmations.*

#### **Affirmation #1 Indigenous Spiritual Self-determination**

*Whatever the action of the church at this General Synod, we affirm the right of Indigenous persons and communities to spiritual self-determination in their discernment and decisions regarding same-sex marriage.*

#### **Affirmation #2 Diverse Understandings of the Existing Canon**

*We affirm that, while there are different understandings of the existing Marriage Canon, those bishops and synods who have authorized liturgies for the celebration and blessing of a marriage between two people of the same sex understand that the existing Canon does not prohibit same-sex marriage.*

#### **Affirmation #3 Diverse Understandings and Teachings**

*We acknowledge the ongoing reality that there is a diversity of understandings and teachings about marriage in the Anglican Church of Canada, and we affirm the prayerful integrity with which those understandings and teachings are held.*

#### **Affirmation #4 Our Commitment to Presume Good Faith**

*We affirm our commitment to presume good faith among those who hold diverse understandings and teachings, and hold dear their continued presence in this church.*

#### **Affirmation #5 Our Commitment to Stand Together**

*We affirm our commitment to walk together and to preserve communion, one with another, in Christ, within this church, within our Anglican Communion, and with our ecumenical partners.*

The 'Word to the Church' describes our ecclesial context at this time and was affirmed by the General Synod in July 2019. The traditional view of marriage is honoured and upheld in the Church in its life and practice. In certain circumstances, after due theological and pastoral reflection, some bishops have authorized same-sex marriages in their diocese. It is messy and remains painful for some. It reflects the discernment of faithful Anglicans, all of whom in good faith are seeking to listen to the Holy Spirit. It is the commitment of the House of Bishops to work together respectfully. We know that ongoing dialogue continues within dioceses as needed.

There is no desire at this time to open the discussion of the marriage canon or to engage in further discussion over whose interpretation of the canon is correct. We do not see this as being helpful to the life of the Church in the midst of a pandemic.

We are grateful for the continued presence of diverse voices in our Church as we listen and respond to God's call. We also know that our history shows that some disagreements continue for many years before clarity is achieved. We are committed to walking together, in prayerful humility, continuing to respect one another and listen for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Linda Nicholls".

The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls,  
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Mark MacDonald".

The Most Rev. Mark MacDonald  
National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Gregory Kerr-Wilson".

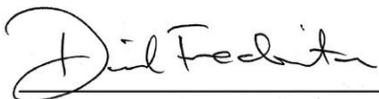
The Most Rev. Gregory Kerr-Wilson  
Metropolitan, Province of Rupert's Land

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Melissa M. Skelton".

The Most Rev. Melissa Skelton  
Metropolitan, Province of B.C. and Yukon

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Anne Germond".

The Most Rev. Anne Germond  
Metropolitan, Province of Ontario

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ David Edwards".

The Most Rev. David Edwards  
Metropolitan, Province of Canada