

## **A Comment on the Statement of the House of Bishops to Members of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada**

1. On May 1, 2007, the House of Bishops issued a statement calling on clergy to implement towards gay and lesbian people and same sex couples “the most generous pastoral response possible within the current teaching of the church”. As examples, they referred to welcoming children to baptism, adults to Holy Communion, and same-sex couples to services of intercessory prayer, and affirming the ministry of avowedly gay clergy. We welcome the concern expressed, for we also seek to practice generous pastoral care for persons of homosexual orientation, and we join with the bishops in encouraging the whole church to do the same.
2. Unfortunately, the Bishops’ statement forecloses any further discussion of the blessing of same sex unions by accepting those in committed homosexual relationships to Communion and confirmation. The statement advocates using the Eucharist as a device to give the church’s recognition to gay and lesbian married couples. This supposes that gay and lesbian practice is, in principle at least, a form of Christian holiness, and it clearly insinuates the hope that the forthcoming General Synod will explicitly sanction the blessing of same-sex unions, so bringing the ACC into line with the civil marriage of gay couples that are now sanctioned by Canadian law. This deviates directly from the pastoral care of homosexuals which the whole Christian church has practiced till very recently, and to which the Lambeth Conference of 1998 recalled us all, and to which the greater part of the world-wide Anglican Communion adheres today. The deviation is totally unacceptable to all those who hold to the apostolic Christian faith as the churches of the Anglican Communion have received it.
3. The principles of the older and, in our view, wiser and more biblical pattern of pastoral care for gay persons are as follows:
  - a. Rightly do the bishops speak of “the long standing Gospel teaching that God in Christ loves each person and that Christ is calling each person to change and grow more fully into God’s image and likeness”. Holy Scripture shows that homosexual drives mar the image of God and lead to behaviour that God forbids and cannot bless, since it transgresses the order of creation. Pastoral care, therefore, while loving the sinner, and indeed out of care for the sinner, should do everything possible to fortify him or her against the practice of the sin.
  - b. Friendship and support from heterosexuals is essential in this ministry. Drawing homosexuals into Christian fellowship is a source of great help to them to stay chaste.
4. It is a grave defect in the HOB Statement that this understanding of appropriate ministry to homosexuals receives no mention. It is our hope that the decisions of General Synod will turn the ACC away from identifying with the attitude of secular society towards gay practice and return us all to the path of ministry to gay people as outlined above.

Rt. Rev. Donald Harvey  
Rev. Dr. J.I. Packer  
Rev. David Short

May 3, 2007

*Distributed by Anglican Essentials Canada*