

A MOTION ON GUIDELINES FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MEMBERS OF THE LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES IN THE DIOCESE OF SALDANHA BAY

Preamble

The Anglican Communion in general and our Province in particular has wrestled to produce a comprehensive and mutually acceptable pastoral response to the diversity of sexual orientation and specifically to that of LGBTIQ members of our church. This includes our pastoral response to those who have contracted same-sex unions.

1. The Lambeth Conference of 1998 (resolution 1.10) - this resolution, among others, acknowledged the diversity of opinion on the matter of homosexuality and called for the continued listening to the experience of gay and lesbian people (the LGBTIQ community).
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1998/section-i-called-to-full-humanity/section-i10-human-sexuality?author=Lambeth+Conference&year=1998>
2. The Provincial Synod of the CPSA (now ACSA) in 2002 acknowledged the role played by gay and lesbian members (the LGBTI community) within the CPSA; encouraged the welcoming and affirmation of all members regardless of their sexual orientation, in all churches of the CPSA: declared that homosexuality was not a sin and encouraged its members to listen to what God is saying – this is a crucial position which the whole of our Province has adopted – the debate is no longer about whether homosexuality is a sin or not, but about how we pastorally minister to the LGBTIQ community.
3. The Provincial Standing Committee (CPSA) in September 2003 affirmed that homosexuality is not sinful and asked whether gays and lesbians in faithful, monogamous and committed relationships should be affirmed – again this indicates an openness to take seriously the question of the affirmation of gays and lesbians in such relationships by our church.
4. In 2003 the 74th General Convention of the of the Episcopal Church USA voted to ratify the election of Eugene Robinson, a priest in a long-term committed same-sex relationship, as Bishop of New Hampshire – this bold step which pioneered the recognition, affirmation and endorsement of clerics who are in the LGBTIQ community at the highest level of ECUSA;
5. In 2004 the Windsor Report, a document of the Anglican Communion, was published. It proposed three moratoria: The ordination of persons living in the same gender union to the episcopate; the blessing of same sex unions; and cross border incursions by bishops – this was an attempt to hold the notion of subsidiarity and common affection, in order to bolster unity in the Anglican Communion. Provincial Synod of ACSA 2005 received the Windsor report and commended it for study.
6. The Diocese of Cape Town Synod July 2009 requested that the bishops provide guidelines for the pastoral care of those in committed same sex relationships – to date the Synod of Bishops has not been able to produce these requested guidelines – this matter, we contend, is one of great urgency in our Diocese.

7. The Synod of Bishops 2009 ACSA affirmed that “Christian marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman... clergy unable to commit to one and other to a Christian marriage partnership are called to a life of celibacy” – this is enshrined in Canon 24 of the Canons and Constitution of ACSA – interestingly the Anglican Church of Canada and the Episcopal Church of Scotland have both amended their equivalent Canon, to provide for the solemnisation of life-long, committed relationships between people, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation.
8. Provincial Synod of 2010 adopted the Anglican Covenant, subject to ratification at the next session of Provincial Synod. The ACSA Synod of Bishops in 2011 developed pastoral guidelines for Civil Unions but not for Same Sex Unions.
9. For the past three years, the Synod of Bishops has been debating the proposed Pastoral Guidelines to enable formal ministry to be given to LGBTI people in our Parishes, but without resolution.
10. At the Synod of Bishops in February 2016, the Bishops issued a statement saying inter alia that “we reaffirm our assurance [of the LGBTI community] that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are members of the, “Body of Christ and share in full membership as baptised members of the church”. However, and notwithstanding this embrace, the Bishops were unable to finalise guidelines that would inform a pastoral ministry to the LGBTI community, adopting rather, the guidelines of Lambeth 1.10 which, while seeking to embrace people of homosexual orientation and rejecting discrimination towards such people, **held that licensed ministers of the church may not pray for, bless or solemnise same sex unions and may not enter into such a union themselves, while holding a Bishop’s license to officiate** – this describes clearly the stance of ACSA at this time, however can be said to embody an intrinsic contradiction, in on the one hand, affirming that members of the LGBTIQ community, “enjoy full membership of the church...”, while on the other are subject to the discrimination and very circumscribed conditional participation as above.

Archbishop Emeritus Njongonkulu Ndungane, in his sermon delivered at the funeral of the late Dean Rowan Smith, declared, **“The fact remains that today, we are a Church in which our Communion has excluded a huge part of itself in certain matters. The blessing of same sex marriages remains an unresolved issue. But why? Why can’t we deal with this issue and get around our rubrics by talking about covenanted partnerships or similar? These matters are real in the world, and our failure to recognise them means that our Christian humanity is suffering.”**

Profound words offered by the Archbishop in his tribute to Fr Rowan Smith – surely significant food for thought, as we deliberate this vital matter.

11. At the Provincial Synod held in September 2016 the Diocese of Saldanha Bay tabled a motion seeking to provide for a, “Window of Opportunity for Guidelines for Pastoral Care in the context of Human Sexuality and Diversity”. When this Motion came before the Synod, the Archbishop called for it to move into ‘Conference Mode’ which enabled presentations to be made reflecting both sides of the debate – this was followed by a time of wide-ranging discussion, held by means of small groups (maximum of 5 people each) into which the Synod had been divided. The Motion was put and lost the following day – this notwithstanding we are proud to have brought to the Synod a ground-breaking Motion which has significantly raised the profile and importance of this debate throughout the Province.

Further prophetic and deeply challenging words drawn from Archbishop Njongonkulu’s sermon,

“We bless everything in Church. We bless buildings. Why not same-sex marriage? If one of our priests goes to a meal in a home of a same sex couple who attend his or her Church, does it not mean that he or she is addressing their relationship by doing that? Of course it does! We would not refuse to administer the sacrament of baptism to the child of a gay couple. But we won’t bless their union.

I have no doubt that Rowan, the priest of the people, would rejoice with us to see a recognition by the Anglican Church and others in accepting the full human-ness of gay and lesbian people in a new, truly rainbow, Church.

It is in this context, then, that I ask for strong and courageous leadership from our Church – the kind of leadership that we saw in the dark days of apartheid – on the questions relating to sexuality and acceptance of LGBTQIA people in all its fullness and consequences.”

Let us show that strong and courageous leadership to which he calls us – this leadership surely goes to the heart of our very humanity and the scared humanity of each member of our church, as we are reminded of the words of our Diocesan Vision Statement,

*“We look at each person
and see the image of God – this insight
explodes all the constraints that limit us. We see
no Jew or Gentile, male or female, no straight,
no gay, no colour, no culture that
seperates, while loving all that each brings.
Seeing what God saw in the story of our Beginnings,
that each person carries the innate goodness of God –
found in the clay of
great life and small life.”*

That this Synod:

1. Welcomes and warmly endorses the appointment of the Archbishop's Commission of Human Sexuality.
2. Congratulates Bishop Raphael on his pioneering work, in raising the profile of this debate in the Province and commends him in his work, as Chair of the Archbishop's Commission on Human Sexuality, particularly as it prepares for the next session of Provincial Synod.
3. Affirms the Biblical warrant for full diversity in the membership of the Church without discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation.
4. Calls the Bishop of the Diocese to grant clergy permission to Pray for and Bless those who are in same-sex unions, as well as minister to individuals in the LGBTIQ community;
5. Calls the Bishop of the Diocese to enable members of the LGBTIQ community to exercise ministry as lay members, at every level of the Diocese's life and to license clergy who are members of the LGBTIQ community.

PROPOSED BY:

SECONDED BY: