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Dear Clergy,

The reporting about the resolutions voted on at the Anglican Church of Canada's General Synod has been confined to resolutions 186 and 187, both of which are narrowly focused on the blessing of same-sex unions. In actual fact, there was a very interesting development at our Synod which showed remarkable consistency and faithfulness.

Early in the Synod we were asked to vote to accept the Canadian response to the Windsor Report on relations within the Anglican Communion. Rather than signing on without question, the Canadian response is nuanced and carefully scripted. We voted that belonging to the Anglican Communion matters to us and we are committed to the ongoing conversation.

Next on the agenda was the St. Michael Report by the Primate's Theological Commission. Asked to give a theological opinion on whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine, the answer was a clear "yes" but not of core doctrine. It was explained that core doctrine, sometimes called dogma, speaks of who God is and God's saving activity. In short it can be said to speak of the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation. This core doctrine is the content of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds. Thus the Report concludes that the blessing of same-sex unions would be a matter of doctrine but it is not so important as to warrant schism. (It should not be communion breaking.) This resolution also passed easily.

Next came a series of resolutions about process. An attempt was made to require that resolutions 186 and 187 be deemed to have passed only if they received a 60% majority. However at this point in the proceedings there was considerable confusion about the voting procedure requirements. It is possible people did not know what was being voted on. Whether they understood or not, the resolution to require 60% failed and a simple majority was now required for resolutions 186 and 187.

Resolution 186 states that the blessing of same-sex unions is not in conflict with the core doctrine of the Anglican Church of Canada. In other words the blessing of same-sex unions is not in conflict with the proclamation of God as the Holy Trinity and as the Word made flesh. As one bishop later commented, even the most conservative African primate should be able to agree with that. This resolution passed by a slim majority.

Resolution 187 said that the General Synod affirms the right of any diocesan synod to approve the blessing of same-sex unions in accordance with their bishop and the parish involved. Often called local option, one bishop said it was akin to having a no-peeing section in a swimming pool. As has been reported widely, the resolution passed in the house of laity and clergy, but failed 19 – 21 in the House of Bishops.

Next came a resolution to amend the marriage canon, to make marriage in the Canadian Anglican Church open to all who are legally eligible. It is very significant that this resolution passed without debate.

Lastly, in an atmosphere that seemed more like filibuster than debate, a resolution was presented and passed asking the Primate's Theological Commission and Faith Worship and Ministry Committee to prepare a report and educational materials in advance of 2010 General Synod about whether the blessing of same-sex unions is a faithful, Spirit-led development of the doctrine of marriage. Remember, the St. Michael Report said the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine but until now no one has been asked to try to actually develop a doctrine of same-sex unions. It also asked for a theological rationale to accompany the new Canon 21 on marriage, which is to come before General Synod 2010.

In short, the Anglican Church of Canada General Synod consistently demonstrated that it is more interested in considering redefining marriage than continuing the debate about blessings.

The outcome of these various resolutions is that our Primate stays at the table of the Primates' meetings; it affords full membership to our Anglican Consultative Council members; and it allows time for further theological reflection at all levels of our church, including all bishops of the Anglican Communion at next year's Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England.

In addition to the above, pastoral provisions provided by the Bishops' Letter of April 30th, 2007 ensures further inclusion of gays and lesbians in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada.

In Christ,

+ *Victoria*

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