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## **THE DIOCESE OF QU'APPELLE** *Anglican Church of Canada*

July 15, 2016

General Synod 2016

Dear friends:

Grace and peace be with you in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada has met and completed its work. It was a Synod with much prayer, worship and rich in the sharing between guests, committees and members of Synod. It was amazing and so uplifting to hear of the ministry and mission endeavours of our church, both here in Canada and around the world. There was and is much to give thanks for.

So many people's hopes and passions were invested in the motion to amend the marriage canon to "*solemnize a marriage between persons of the same sex if authorized by the diocesan bishop.*"

On Monday evening, it appeared that the motion had failed to achieve the necessary two thirds majority by one vote in the House of Clergy. Faithful LGBTQ2S Christians felt rejected by their Church and those who supported them felt powerless to respond.

On Tuesday, it was discovered that one clerical vote had been misallocated as a lay vote. With the correction made, First Reading of the amendment was now carried. Those who did not feel able to support this change now felt the same disappointment, and many questioned if there was still room for them at the Anglican Church of Canada table.

So what does all this mean?

At one level, nothing has changed. The Marriage Canon remains unaltered unless the resolution to change the canon passes Second Reading at General Synod 2019. For me, this was one of the most difficult decisions I have been called upon to make and I yearned for a different way of coming to a consensus. I voted yes because of the particular wording and intent of the resolution; wording very different from the original motion presented; wording that offers the Church a framework to continue the debate and preserve its unity; wording that, if passed in 2019, will allow dioceses with their bishop's authorization to 'opt in' to same sex marriage rather demand a diocese, bishop, minister, congregation that hold to a traditional understanding of marriage to opt out, post 2019.

My decision, whether to authorize the solemnization of same sex marriages in the Diocese of Qu'Appelle will not be made until after this matter is resolved at the next General Synod and after further consultation with the diocese. Therefore I appeal to all in our diocese that we not react to what the papers or Facebook comments say. Rather, let us be patient, compassionate and allow for the continued discernment of the Spirit on this matter. Indeed let us allow for the due process of our beloved church to run its course. I deeply regret the actions of some bishops in the Anglican Church of Canada and appeal to them to honour due process and not authorize same sex marriages until this matter is resolved in 2019. I also remind the clergy of this diocese of their oath of obedience.

The resolution to amend the Marriage Canon will now come to our Diocesan Synod and to Provincial Synod for the purpose of "*consultation and comment*." If it passes Second Reading at General Synod 2019, the changes would take effect the following January if, I, or my successor(s) authorize the change.

As a Diocese, we must now commit ourselves to a time of prayerful study and discernment. We must commit ourselves to creating safe and holy spaces where all people may share in honesty and love. We must commit ourselves to rigorous biblical, theological, liturgical and prayerful engagement across our differences. A good place to start is to read the report '*This Holy Estate*'. We must walk together, pray together, study together and respect one another. We must all seek out and engage in honesty and respect with people whose positions and experiences differ from our own. We must do all of these things remembering the commitment in our Baptismal Covenant to "*respect the dignity of every human being*."

Those who desire recognition, affirmation and acceptance of their love of another, before God and the Church, and for those who yearn for the radical inclusion of LGBTQ2S people by offering the Sacrament of Marriage may be frustrated by three more years. By the same token, those who hold a traditional view of the nature of Christian Marriage may be anxious about what the potential change may mean for their place in the life of the Anglican Church. In the days ahead and through this process, we need to prayerfully acknowledge those frustrations and anxieties, while continuing to recognize each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Thank you all for your continual prayer during General Synod. Your prayers have guided, upheld and sustained us. I also want to thank our synod delegates: clergy delegates Peter Boote and Dell Bornowsky, lay delegates Jason Antonio and Jim White and youth delegate Matthew Gobbett. I especially want to thank them for the intentional way they came alongside people who held views different from theirs and for the way they engaged in dialogue and prayer.

Many have asked me where I saw the Spirit moving at General Synod 2016.

Through all the confusion and emotions experienced, everyone at this Synod felt the pain of the other. It was as if the Lord wants us to note and to remember that pain and hold that pain knowing that, whatever the outcome, there will be pain for some. I saw the Spirit at work there.

The narrow margin by which the measure passed - in both the House of Clergy and the House of Bishops - was another sign, a call of the Spirit to engage more fully with the discernment and dialogue required by the Church. I saw the Spirit at work there.

The majority of delegates engaged from their heart. While there were some hurtful things said and done, there were many more fruitful and honest conversations. I don't know if many positions were changed, but many delegates came to understand each other in a more fulsome and Godly manner. I saw the spirit at work there.

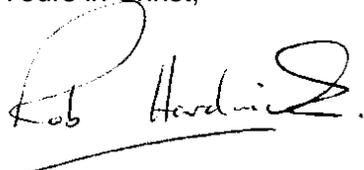
There are challenging days ahead, and we need to face them together, as a Diocesan family. As Paul says to the Church at Corinth, "*The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.*"

Please know that I am more than willing to meet you individually or as a parish group over the weeks and months ahead.

*Let us pray:*

*O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favourably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery. By the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation. Let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by Him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Qu'Appelle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

+Robert Qu'Appelle