

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate  
Thurs., July 14, 2016

*“Forbearing one another in love”*

In light of decisions made at General Synod 2016 concerning the solemnizing of same-sex marriage, I pray our Church can and will take to heart Paul’s plea with the Christians living in Ephesus – “I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Going into General Synod the delegates knew there would be pastoral implications whether the Resolution to amend the Marriage Canon passed or not. In order to pass, it would, according to the Declaration of Principles (General Synod Handbook) require a two-thirds majority in each of the three orders voting – bishops, clergy, and laity.

On Monday, July 11<sup>th</sup> the result of the vote was that in the orders of bishops and laity there was the required two-thirds majority but not in the order of clergy. The vote was very close. The pastoral implication was that LGBTQ2S persons and those who have accompanied them were disappointed and saddened. Many wept. The Synod sat in silence.

Because the vote was so very close, on Tuesday morning there was a request that the record of this vote be made public and Synod concurred. Analysis of the actual vote revealed that one clergy member’s vote was not properly recorded. The Chancellor then advised the Synod that according to the numbers we in fact did have a two-thirds majority vote in the order of clergy, and I announced the resolution had therefore passed in all three orders. The pastoral implication was that a number of members of Synod were disappointed and saddened. Many wept. The Synod sat in silence.

We have been deeply divided over the solemnizing of same-sex marriage for a very long time. That has not changed. In the midst of this division, I need to take to heart Paul’s counsel and I encourage our whole Church to do the same. “Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” writes St. Paul. He reminds us of our fellowship in Christ Jesus, through our baptism, and in the eucharist. He reminds us that we are “the Body of Christ, members one of another”, and that we in fact need each other, and need to find ways to make room for one another.

In keeping with the theme of Synod, “You are my witnesses” the question with which we must now wrestle is this, “For what kind of pastoral and prophetic witness can and will we be known?”

I pray that witness not be marred by fraction and breaking of communion with one another, but rather that “forbearing of one another in love” that “eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”. More than ever we must make efforts not to turn away from one another but rather to one another, not to ignore but to recognize one another, not to walk apart but together. We need as a Church to work hard at maintaining our communion in Christ, for in his reconciling love is our hope and our life.

The Synod passed on first reading an amendment to the Marriage Canon to allow for same sex marriage in our Church. Because it is a Canon about doctrine, consideration of the matter is required in “two successive sessions of the General Synod”. So the matter will be before the General Synod in 2019. In the meantime, it is referred “for consideration to diocesan and provincial Synods”.

I call the Church to seize this opportunity. I commend the General Synod's reaffirmation by resolution of the 2004 General Synod Statement on the integrity and sanctity of same sex relationships, and its call for a much wider and deeper engagement with the report, "This Holy Estate". I will ask the Council of General Synod (COGS) to give immediate attention to the matter of translation, at least of the executive summary of the report and frequently asked questions. I will ask COGS to consider what other resources might be helpful. I will be asking the House of Bishops at their fall meeting to consider how we encourage "further consideration" of the matter, and to show strong leadership in their dioceses in hosting events, dialogues, and studies.

In all these conversations I want to encourage much more engagement with people who identify as LGBTQ2S. We have spent a lot of time talking about them. I believe we need to take much more time to talk with them and to learn of their lived experience of covenanted love in relationships that are monogamous and life long. I know that will require of all of us a good deal of courage and grace.

Finally, I ask that without ceasing, we pray for one another, mindful always of the counsel of Paul.

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(Ephesians 4: 1-3)