

The Anglican Church of Canada

Diocese of Athabasca

From the desk of The Rt. Rev. Fraser Lawton



July 12, 2016

To the people of the Diocese of Athabasca

Dear Fellow Servants of Jesus,

Most of you will be aware that the General Synod meeting in Toronto this past week addressed a resolution to change the marriage canon. As some of you will know, after a long debate on Monday evening, it appeared that the resolution was defeated. A reexamination of the vote on Tuesday resulted in that being overturned, and the resolution was declared to have been carried. This gives “first reading” to the proposed change, with a further vote required at the next General Synod in 2019 before it could come into effect. The existing canon remains in force at this time.

The experience of discussing, debating and voting on the resolution was a difficult and painful experience for all involved. Many were deeply hurt when it seemed to have been defeated. Others were deeply injured and grieved when it was overturned the next day. For many of us, the process leading up to the synod and the way the decision unfolded was difficult and very troubling. It is clear from this experience that the church has great need to better live out Christian community and to welcome and care for those who are hurting and feel rejected and unloved. The gospel imperative calls us to do so. We are also called to give ourselves to Jesus as disciples, sacrificing ourselves to live His way. The love of Jesus not only welcomes us, but also transforms us and calls us to be conformed to His ways.

There are already many strong reactions to what the synod has done. However, I am calling on every member of the Diocese of Athabasca to:

- Intentional prayer for the church, for discernment and wisdom for the diocese, and for God’s grace
- To commit to one another to walk together in seeking and following God’s direction going forward as a diocese
- To commit to discipleship

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It is my desire to engage the diocese in a process of discernment and response to what has happened. We will do so prayerfully and carefully. Sadly, many relationships, including between dioceses and various church bodies, have been seriously damaged. Nonetheless, we trust that the Lord will lead us in what will now develop out of these. I am reminded that the church is not ours, but is the Lord's. As such, we know that though there are difficult times and disagreements among His people, we trust that He is able to accomplish His will and purposes.

I also want to thank and commend our delegates to synod for the tremendous way they shared in the work of synod and represented us with grace, care and love. I ask your prayers for me and for all those who share in the leadership of the Anglican Church of Canada at this time.

The Lord be with you,

+Fraser

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Bishop of Athabasca