

Reflections on General Synod 2007

Dear Friends:

General Synod 2007, with the theme *'Draw the Circle Wide. Draw it Wider Still'* is now over and its decisions in the history books. It was, in many respects, a wonderful synod, bringing the Canadian church together from sea to sea to sea and making both important and historic decisions. On an emotional and tense day, Bishop Fred Hiltz of the Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI, was elected our 13th Primate, and, in a service which was magnificent and hot(!), Archbishop Hiltz was installed into that office, amid the best of Anglican ceremony and pageantry. One of the most moving events at General Synod was the recognition and presentation of Bishop Mark McDonald as *National Indigenous Anglican Bishop*, a new office in our Church. Mark is an amazing person, and brings tremendous skill and experience to this new position.

The eyes of our Church (and indeed of the Anglican world) were on us as Synod debated and made decisions about doctrine and about a local diocesan option for the blessing of same-sex unions. I know that many are left confused and uncertain after the votes take on Sunday, 24 June. The resolution dealing with doctrine is a very important one: Synod resolved that the blessing of same sex union is not in conflict with the core doctrine of our church. That resolution, which needed to be carried by a straight majority in both General Synod houses: Laity and Clergy voting together, and the Order of Bishops, was carried by a significant majority in the 'lower' house and by a vote of 21-19 in the order of Bishops. The second resolution, deferred from the 2004 Synod, which would allow for dioceses to make a local decision, was passed by the laity and clergy, voting separately, but narrowly defeated by the Bishops, in a similar 21-19 vote. This was difficult and painful for many, made all the more so by the fact that, clearly, the church wanted to move ahead on this matter, but some Bishops, concerned about our international Anglican relationships, and because of reactions in their own diocese, stopped what seemed to be the intention of the Clergy and the Laity.

I was initially very angry and tearful at the decision – tearful because this news hurts many people whom I know and love, and angry because such a small majority of Bishops can decide such things, and because it seems to be irrelevant that so much has been done since 2004 and that so many Canadian Anglicans clearly want this matter to be resolved.

In the days since, I have both reflected personally on this matter and spoken with many other similarly minded folk, including many of our Bishops. **Three** things are important to note and remember:

- The decision to declare our church doctrinally on the blessing of same sex unions is a critically important step and should not be overlooked by anyone.
- There is no longer any moratorium in effect on the Bishops in terms of local diocesan decision
- There is a palpable energy in both our Diocese and other urban dioceses to keep this matter on the agenda of Diocesan synods and to look seriously at moving ahead in places where it is both appropriate and compelling.

I want to remind you that I was not a member of General Synod this time and, therefore, had no vote. I was present in the House throughout the deliberations and was very involved in the

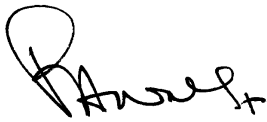
agenda planning day by day. More frustrating for me than being without a vote was being without a *voice* at Synod. I think that you can all understand why!

This news has caused even more pain and strong reaction in the Cathedral community. I both understand and empathize entirely with those reactions. I want to urge everyone to 'hang in' – a tough thing, I know. I believe that the future is ours in this issue, and that our Diocesan Synod will take some steps (I do not know which steps) when it meets this November. It is time for us (again) to speak out forcefully and confidently with our fellow Niagara anglicans; it is time for us as a community to encourage and support our members of Synod as it approaches.

The spirit of God and the love of Christ are strong among us; we know that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters are both fully loved by God and welcomed into this community and into our church with the full recognition of the blessed nature of their relationships. It is up to you and to me to show leadership – strong, loving, and wise – in this matter.

My prayers for us all – we will live to see another day!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Wall", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Wall
Rector & Dean of Niagara