

General Synod Archives



Report of the Task Force on Human Sexuality

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- Date:** 1978 January 30 - February 3
- Source:** House of Bishops. Minutes
- Record Type:** Resolution
- Mover:** Archbishop Crabb
- Seconder:** Bishop Frame
- Prologue:** The Primate indicated that he will write to Roy Bonisteel of the "Man Alive" program, expressing concern regarding some of the emphases of the program "The Gay Christian."
- Text:** "That we receive the report." CARRIED
- Notes:** "A Statement by the Anglican Bishops of Canada" was circulated by Bishop Garnsworthy, and the Rev. Richard Berryman presented a proposed press release. The House agreed to function as a Committee of the whole for purposes of discussion.
- A suggestion was made by Bishop Clarke and Archbishop Somerville that the statement conclude with the words "heterosexual marriages" at the end of the last paragraph.
- Bishop Hollis and Bishop Snowden proposed this addition to the final paragraph: "and we cannot authorize our clergy to bless homosexual unions". This met with the approval of the House.
- Bishop Hollis and Bishop Snowden suggested a further addition to the final paragraph as follows: "nor can we permit our church buildings to be used for that purpose". The House did not concur. The amended document is as follows:
- "Questions of human sexuality are a matter of great concern to the Church of our day. Prominent amongst these concerns is the attitude of the Church towards homosexual persons. While homosexuality is a very complex and involved issue, nevertheless, in response to specific questions directed to the Anglican Church of Canada, we have decided that a statement is needed at this time.
- We believe as Christians that homosexual persons as children of God, have a full and equal claim, with all other persons, upon the love, acceptance, concern and pastoral care of the Church. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to guard against all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died. We affirm that homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection under the law with all other Canadian citizens.
- It is clear from Holy Scripture that only the sexual union of male and female can find expression within the covenant of Holy Matrimony. In the heart of biblical teaching about creation we discover insights into the nature and purpose of sexuality. Rooted in God's creative purpose is the fulfillment and completion of male and female in each other, together with the procreative function of sexuality. Thus the Church confines its nuptial blessing to heterosexual marriages, and we cannot authorize our Clergy to bless homosexual unions. We are aware that some homosexuals develop for themselves relationships of mutual support, help and comfort, about which the Church must show an appropriate concern. Such

relationships, though, must not be confused with Holy Matrimony, and the Church must do nothing which appears to support any such suggestion."

An announcement was made that the Rev. Richard Berryman, in revising a statement which he had prepared, will indicate that there will be on-going study of this subject by the Bishops.

Discussion then centred around two matters:

1. The preparation of a Study Document for general use throughout the Church;
2. Provision for continuing study of this matter on the part of the House of Bishops.

It was agreed that the Agenda Committee be instructed to provide for further consideration of the subject at a future meeting.

Archbishop Somerville and Archbishop Watton proposed that we recommend to the National Executive Council that a Study Guide be prepared. The House concurred.

A proposal was made that Bishops Hatfield, Parke-Taylor and Hill be a Committee of the House to provide both background material and co-operative assistance to the National Executive Council in this matter.

It was agreed to have included in the press release the fact that plans are being made for the preparation of study material.

Press Release - The Primate's Commission on Human Sexuality (Incorporating "A Statement by the Anglican Bishops of Canada") [pp. 44-48]

The Press Release was placed before the House. The release was carefully scrutinized and some minor changes in wording were made. The following addition was proposed by Bishops Valentine and Goodings:

"We are aware that some homosexuals develop for themselves relationships of mutual support, help and comfort about which the church must show and appropriate concern. Such relationships, though, must not be confused with Holy Matrimony and the Church must do nothing which appears to support any such suggestion."

In its original form it contained the words "need and" between "homosexuals" and "develop" in the first line. With this change, the addition received the approval of the House, and the statement as amended was approved. It is as follows:

"Open discussion and debate, often highly emotional, on the life and rights of homosexual persons in society, have become commonplace and divisive in recent years.

The members of the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada, as chief pastors of the Church are obligated to exercise faithful witness to that office, and at the same time, to wrestle with the human and pastoral problems which homosexuality presents to the Church at all levels as it attempts to minister to all people. Realizing the complexity of this area of human relationships and the wide divergence of both popular and informed opinion, the Bishops, in the summer of 1976, asked for help and advice in facing the problems raised by homosexuality in contemporary society. They commissioned a Task Force of eleven

persons, from a variety of backgrounds, to present an advisory report to them to assist in their deliberations.

The Task Force presented the first draft of its report in 1977 and was asked to do further work in some areas and report back to the meeting of the Bishops early in 1978. The House of Bishops has been meeting this

past week in Mississauga and has received the second draft of the report. The lengthy draft is still considered confidential as it was prepared as an advisory paper to the Bishops, not a position paper for the whole Church. The Bishops have committed themselves to continuing study of this vital issue and specifically of the report's 15 recommendations. They will continue their deliberations at future meetings of the House. They have asked that a study paper be prepared in the near future for study and discussion at all levels of the Church, and by other interested groups. In the meantime, the Bishops have issued the following specific statement:

Questions of human sexuality are a matter of great concern to the Church of our day. Prominent amongst these concerns is the attitude of the Church towards homosexual persons. While homosexuality is a very complex and involved issue, nevertheless, in response to specific questions directed to the Anglican Church of Canada, we have decided that a statement is needed at this time.

It is clear from Holy Scripture that only the sexual union of male and female can find expression within the covenant of Holy Matrimony.

In the heart of biblical teaching about creation we discover insights into the nature and purpose of sexuality. Rooted in God's creative purpose is the fulfillment and completion of male and female in each other, together with the procreative function of sexuality. Thus the Church confines its nuptial blessing to heterosexual marriages, and we cannot authorize our Clergy to bless homosexual unions. We are aware that some homosexuals develop for themselves relationships of mutual support, help and comfort, about which the Church must show an appropriate concern. Such relationships, though, must not be confused with Holy Matrimony, and the Church must do nothing which appears to support any such suggestion."

On the suggestion of Archbishop Davis and Bishop Short, it was agreed that the Rev. Richard Berryman should be the contact person for press purposes.

Subjects:

Television broadcasting - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Man Alive (Television program)

Bonisteel, Roy, 1930-2013

Homosexuality - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Homosexuality - Religious aspects - Christianity

Same sex unions - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Sex - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Marriage - Religious aspects - Anglican Church of Canada

Anglican Church of Canada. House of Bishops. Task Force on Human Sexuality

Berryman, Richard (Richard James), 1932-2014