

## **A LETTER FROM BISHOP MICHAEL BIRD TO THE DIOCESE OF NIAGARA**

Dear Friends in Christ

I write to you on the last full day of General Synod where I have joined our Niagara delegates in what I believe has been a productive, informative and important gathering in the life of our Church. These ten days in Halifax have seen us pass a number of important resolutions; we heard about the significant and inspiring work that has been undertaken at the National level over the past 3 years and engaged in a number of helpful discussions. Many of those days were very long - often we began at 8:45 a.m. and didn't conclude until after 9 p.m.

We had the privilege of joining the Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI in their 300th Anniversary celebration that culminated in a beautiful and moving service in a local arena with thousands in attendance.

You will hear more from our delegates in due course about what they experienced over these days but I want to say a few initial words to you about the report we have endorsed just 3 hours ago entitled "Sexuality Discernment". It is the distillation of a series of conversations and dialogue that all the members of General Synod were engaged in as a means of articulating the place the Church finds itself in at the present time with regard to the Blessing of Same Sex Unions.

It would be easy to read this report as an indication of a lack of progress in our churches attitude to the full inclusion of gays and lesbians. I know some in Niagara had hoped for definitive, legislative action by General Synod. As we met and talked here in Halifax it became clear that such action would only strain our relationships further. Instead, General Synod opted for a statement that describes where we are as a National Church.

I believe this statement does represent significant movement in the life of our Church. All of our delegates agree that a new spirit of openness and generosity was felt in our meetings and I am pleased with the acknowledgement and the acceptance of the context for the kind of local discernment that we have undertaken. I also need to say to you that this statement and the desire it expresses to walk together bears witness to the work and leadership that our diocese has offered the wider church.

Coming out of this General Synod I am committed to the journey we have been travelling and I am confident that we can now give our full attention to the work of responding to God's mission for our common life together as a more inclusive and vibrant Christian community.

Yours faithfully

+ Michael Bird