



The Diocese of Huron

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

The Right Reverend Linda Nicholls
Bishop of Huron

July 13, 2019

Dear friends in Christ,

I write to you with deeply conflicted emotions tonight. Today I was elected to succeed Archbishop Fred Hiltz as the next Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. This is an honour and responsibility that is deeply humbling and somewhat terrifying! With this comes the knowledge that I must resign as the Bishop of Huron which is a deep regret.

I write to you also the day after the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada held the required second vote on the proposed change to the Marriage Canon to permit same-sex marriages. The vote did not receive the required 2/3's majority in the house of bishops though did receive it in the clergy and laity. The change to the marriage canon therefore did not pass.

Marriage Canon

The debate was long and, for the most part, respectful of all who were in the room. When the result of the vote was shown on the screen there was only a long, deep silence broken by the intense keening of one of the LGBTQ2+ youth delegates for whom this result was simply too painful to even contemplate. That sound will resound in the hearts of all those present as a moment not only of personal mourning but of the mourning of a church that was unable to find a way to live with differences despite the best efforts of many people including the affirmations recorded in *A Word to the Church*, supported earlier in the day (see:

<https://www.anglican.ca/news/a-word-to-the-church-considering-the-proposed-amendment-of-marriage-canon-xxi/30023889/>)

This has been a challenging discussion for the Church over many years as there continue to be those who hold the traditional view that marriage can only be between a man and a woman while others believe the covenant of marriage can be extended to same-sex couples. Sometimes there are people of both views in the same parish sharing the pew with one another, each seeking to be faithful to God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Whichever opinion we each hold in this matter we are God's people together. We come to the table of the Lord not because we agree with one another on all things but because we have been called, loved, forgiven and accepted in Jesus Christ.

The failure of the motion to change the marriage canon will be deeply painful for LGBTQ2+ members of our Church and for those beyond the Church who looked to this step as a sign of hope and inclusion. In the Diocese of Huron we will continue to offer the opportunity for a

blessing of a civil same-sex marriage, recognizing the intention to live in fidelity, mutual love and comfort in a lifelong union. In light of my election as Primate, I pray that the diocese and the new bishop of Huron will discern what other steps to support same-sex couples and their families may be available. I am confident that the Diocese of Huron will find ways to live graciously and with respect for one another.

Primate

Over the past three years and more you have welcomed me into the Diocese of Huron with warmth and patience – warmth in every parish visit as I have travelled the length and breadth of the diocese and been invited into parish life and events and patience as I have discovered the history and particular quirks and joys of the culture of this wonderful part of God’s Church. I am still learning and it does feel too soon to be leaving. Please know that Huron will continue to have a special place in my heart. I will listen for stories of your ministries and rejoice in your faithfulness in our Church.

The new Primate must resign from their present diocese within three months of election. It is my intention to discuss a formal resignation date with the Diocesan Executive but not before the end of September. One promise I made in recent months was that following General Synod my first task would be my full vacation for a much needed rest. I will be on vacation from July 19- August 18. After a further week of continuing education I will return to Huron and begin the process of handing over responsibilities.

Our diocesan canons designate the appointment of an Administrator by Diocesan Council in the absence of a bishop. This person will oversee the work of the bishop during an interim period in which a new bishop will be elected and consecrated. The Diocesan Office will keep the diocese informed of that appointment and of the proposed date for an election and consecration of a new bishop. My prayers will be with you in the coming months of this transition and although I know it will be unsettling I also know the resilience of the diocese and the reality that the primary work of the diocese is the day to day ministry being carried on in each and every parish. That will not change!

Now I ask for your prayers as we both enter into a time of transitions. Pray for me, as I relinquish my responsibilities in Huron and look to the life of the whole Anglican Church of Canada as Primate. Pray for the diocese during the transition and especially for the diocesan staff who will, I know, support all of you in the coming months. I will keep you all in my prayers.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Nicholls". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Linda Nicholls

Bishop of Huron and Primate-elect