

July 2007

## **From the Bishop.....**

-The Right Reverend David N. Ashdown

Our church is currently engaged in a process of attempting to discern God's will and the prompting of the Holy Spirit as it relates to our understanding of human sexuality and what are appropriate expressions of that sexuality for Christians in today's world.

While our church does not bless same-gender unions, we believe that it is not only appropriate but a Gospel imperative to pray with the whole people of God, no matter what their circumstance. In so doing we convey the long standing Gospel teaching that God in Christ loves each person and indeed loves him/her so much that Christ is calling each person to change and grow more fully into God's image and likeness. To refuse to pray with any person or people is to suggest that God is not with them.

Following the decisions made by General Synod 2007 and in accordance with the Pastoral Statement of the House of Bishops Spring 2007, I am issuing the following pastoral guidelines for the Diocese of Keewatin.

First, all persons of good will who seek fellowship within Christ's Church are to be welcomed without reference to their marital status or sexual orientation.

Secondly, no child is to be denied baptism on the basis of the marital status or sexual orientation of the parents.

Thirdly, no adult is to be denied baptism and no baptized Christian is to be denied communion or confirmation because of their marital status or because of being in a committed sexual relationship.

Fourthly, there is a long tradition within the Anglican Church of recognizing the validity of marriages conducted by civil authority in accordance with the law of the land even if those marriages do not conform to our expectations. Therefore when a legally married couple seeks the church's reception of their marriage and asks their parish's recognition, the priest in charge **must** consult with the bishop. If, following that consultation, the bishop gives permission in writing, a eucharist may be celebrated with the couple - and if they desire with their family and friends. This eucharist may include appropriate intercessory prayers for their mutual fidelity, the deepening of their discipleship, and for their baptismal ministry. There is to be no exchange of vows. There is to be no nuptial blessing, unless the marriage conforms to current church teaching and standards.

Finally, I call upon all those who consider themselves to be committed followers of Christ worshipping in any congregation that is part of the Diocese of Keewatin to prayerfully, respectfully, and gently enter into a process of dialogue and discernment in this important adventure of discovering the Spirit's direction for the Diocese of Keewatin, Christ's church, and the whole of creation.