



Diocese of Huron: Marriage Canon Revisions

Video Resources from 2018 Synod for further conversations

At the 2018 Diocese of Huron Synod, the Primate and our Diocesan Bishop responded frankly to a series of questions about the proposed changes to the Marriage Canon.

Members of the Marriage Canon Task Force asked the questions on behalf of participants in the Deanery Conversations.

The Deanery Conversations took place in Fall 2017 and Winter 2018. At each gathering, open to everyone in the Diocese, participants watched a [Video for Deanery Conversations](#). The video outlines the history of the church's deliberations about same-sex relationships; it also highlights scriptural and theological considerations. The participants then engaged in facilitated conversations where they raised a number of questions and concerns.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz and Bishop Linda Nicholls responded to some of these questions and concerns at the 2018 Synod and their dialogue was video recorded.

Requests from 2018 Synod Members:

- For access to copies of the video recording of the dialogue between Archbishop Fred Hiltz and Bishop Linda Nicholls.
- For conversation starters to use in parish conversations

The response:

- We created a series of five short videos; each one is an excerpt from the longer dialogue. Click on the title of each video in this document to view the videos.
- We created a written summary of the content of each video and suggested conversation starters.
- This format will allow for maximum flexibility and responsiveness to the needs in individual parishes. Choose which of the videos, and the order, most helpful for your parish. Use the conversation starters or develop your own.
 - The parish conversations are for the parish only. Unlike the Deanery Conversations, comments will not be collected or submitted to the Diocese for further discussion at our Synod.
 - The purpose of the parish conversations is for the parish to understand the views of its members, at present, and to understand more about our neighbours in the Diocese and across the Anglican Church of Canada.
- The videos may also be helpful in other settings, for example, Deanery Council meetings or at Clericus meetings.
- You may also wish to show the [Video for Deanery Conversations](#) and use conversations starters such as:
 - *Did anything surprise you in this video? – OR - What feelings did this video stir up in you? What questions do you have about the information presented in the video? How might the vote at General Synod in 2019 affect you?*



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Group Norms:

- At the Deanery Gatherings we used a set of group norms in order to set and maintain a respectful tone (see page 3).
- We recommend the use of these group norms for parish-based conversations.

Prayer:

- We ask you to include prayer as part of your parish conversations.
- Please pray for the Bishops, clergy, and lay people who will gather in General Synod in July 2019.
- Sample prayer:

God of our hope and strength of our hearts,
we are grateful for this opportunity we have/have had
to listen to and speak with one another.

Moving forward, we would ask that your grace abound to us in this time
as we continue to seek your face.

Set us free from the distractions and distresses
of fear, anxiety and uncertainty,
helping us to faithfully recognize your image in one another.

Give us humility to trust in your loving care and confidence
in your Spirit working in and through those who lead us. .

As we journey together awaken us to the joy and gladness
found in your presence all to the praise and glory of your name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Looking for further resources?

- See the Diocesan webpage. Go to Resources, choose Diocesan, and then choose Marriage Canon Task Force.
- For example, there is a [Summary of This Holy Estate](#) (the Marriage Commission Report) that gives responses to other important questions such as:
 - Is the church allowing its teachings to be dictated by society rather than scripture? Do the proposed changes in the Marriage Canon represent a change in the Church's definition of marriage
 - Are the proposed changes in the Marriage Canon being driven by special interest groups within the church?
 - Why make the changes to the Marriage Canon? Isn't blessing civilly-married same-sex relationships enough



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Group Norms for Conversations

1. We will be present to each other.
2. We will refrain from using electronic devices.
3. We will speak in the first person.
4. We will not speak on behalf of a group but will speak from the truth of our own experiences; conversely we will respect the right of people to speak of their own experiences.
5. We will ask no questions that we are not prepared to answer ourselves.
6. We will avoid using disrespectful language.
7. We will respect the privacy of others; after the group session is over we will not attribute remarks or views to a particular person.



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Video 1: Ongoing discernment about marriage

Summary of Video Content (*7 minutes and 15 seconds long*)

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada gives a national perspective and Bishop Linda Nicholls, Bishop of the Diocese of Huron, gives a Diocesan perspective on what will happen after the vote to change the Marriage Canon at General Synod 2019. Both emphasize the continuing work of discernment, and the pastoral care the church will need to provide, after the vote at General Synod 2020.

Question: What will happen across the country if the vote to change the marriage canon [to allow for same-sex marriage in the church] is a yes, or if it is a no?

Archbishop Fred Hiltz

- The outcome of the vote will take effect until January 1, 2020.
- This will provide some space for us to discern how we will live with the outcome of the decision.
- For some there will be profound disappointment and hurt; for some, anger. We will need to find a way to pastorally address all of that.
- At General Synod 2019 we will need to find a way to note concerns and then it will be the responsibility of the Council of General Synod to address that.
- Then there will be opportunities for Dioceses to make their own responses between General Synod 2019 and January 2020.

Bishop Linda Nicholls

- In the period of time between General Synod 2019 and January 2020 [the Diocese] will need consultation
- *If the outcome of the vote is a yes:*
 - The Diocesan Bishop is still required to say whether this canon will be exercised within this Diocese; there will be time to discern how this might be implemented in the Diocese.
 - This Diocese has made a positive affirmation of the blessing of same-sex partnerships and same-sex civil marriages.
- *If the outcome of the vote at General Synod is a no:*
 - There still needs to be consultation and conversations about what does that mean for this Diocese?
 - What does this mean for our pastoral response?
- ***Importance of Pastoral Response***
 - Bishop Linda notes that the breadth of the response of the whole Canadian church is present in the Diocese of Huron. Our pastoral response is going to be critical.



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Video Resources from 2018 Synod for further conversations

Video 1: Ongoing discernment about marriage, continued

- ***Two Understandings of the Sacrament of Marriage***
 - We have continuing side-by-side two theologically defensible and understandable and opposite understandings of the sacrament of marriage and we are still going to be in a time of long discernment. We're going to need to live together with both of these realities in our midst.
 - How do we do that and continue to listen to the voice of God as that discernment moves forward? It may mean making space for both, side-by-side.

Question: Speaking of those two faithful theological streams, can you think of analogies in the past of the church where we had a similar two-way faithful understanding?

Bishop Linda Nicholls, Diocese of Huron

- The ordination of women
 - There was an allowance of a conscience clause for each diocese in the country.
- Movement around the consideration of the remarriage of divorced person
 - First conversations held in the late 1800's.
 - Final decision to remarry divorced persons made in 1969.
 - 70 years of discernment.

Conversation Starters

Did anything surprise you in this video? – OR - What feelings did this video stir up in you?

How do you understand the statement that “we have continuing side-by-side two theologically defensible and understandable and opposite understandings of the sacrament of marriage”? What questions do you have about this statement?

What are some practical ways you can imagine for “making space” for both understandings of marriage, side-by-side?

What might help you live with the outcome of the vote on the Marriage Canon?



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Video 2: Impact of changing the Marriage Canon on our ecumenical and international relationships

Summary of Video Content (*4 minutes and 23 seconds long*)

Archbishop Fred Hiltz states there will be international consequences if General Synod decides to amend the Marriage Canon, for example, members of the Anglican Church of Canada might not be able to represent the Anglican Communion in ecumenical dialogues. He also provides insight into the idea and practice of “consequences” in the Anglican Communion.

Question: How might our decision [to amend the Marriage Canon] affect our ecumenical and international relationships?

Archbishop Fred Hiltz

We have to be realistic – there will be consequences.

- When The Episcopal Church [in the United States] amended their marriage canon in 2015 there were consequences for the church and its engagement in the life of the communion – particularly the ecumenical bodies of the communion and those bodies where decisions are being made with respect to doctrine in the life of the communion. The Episcopal Church [and later the Scottish Episcopal Church] could no longer represent the Anglican Communion on the ecumenical dialogues of the church.
- There is every indication that such consequences will apply to our church as well.

Some of the Primates are struggling with the concept of consequences.

- How do we manage conflict in the communion?
- In the draft of the Anglican Covenant it was the Anglican Consultative Council that was given the authority to deal with conflict.
- Archbishop Hiltz’s read is that the Primate’s Council has seized this authority and he doesn’t think it is theirs’.

Conversation Starters

Did anything surprise you in this video? – OR - What feelings did this video stir up in you?

What questions or concerns do you have about the consequences the Anglican Communion, or other church bodies, might impose if General Synod votes to amend the Marriage Canon?



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Video 3: Living together with different views of marriage

Summary of Video Content (*8 minutes and 23 seconds long*)

Bishop Linda Nicholls clarifies what will happen if a cleric's views on same-sex marriage are different from what the Bishop authorizes. Bishop Linda Nicholls and Archbishop Fred Hiltz reflect on some of the pastoral implications of the upcoming vote on the Marriage Canon. In conclusion, Archbishop Fred Hiltz urges people in the church to make space for others with a view of marriage that is different from one's own.

Question: There are concerns about the implications for clergy-persons whose views are different from those of their Bishop or the vote at General Synod.

Bishop Linda, what if you authorize same-sex marriages in our Diocese and a clergy-person is not willing to officiate at a same-sex wedding?

Or, what if you don't authorize same-sex marriages in the Diocese and a clergy-person wants to officiate at one?

- Any cleric, currently and in an ongoing way, has the right to say, for reasons of conscience, I am not able to officiate this wedding. That applies to any marriage.
- However, if I *don't* authorize same-sex marriage it doesn't work the other way because the clergy are under a vow of obedience to the Diocesan Bishop.
- A cleric is not permitted to break that vow without being aware that there would need to be consequences to that.
- This is part of what it means to live together in those relationships of obedience and community where we are discerning *together* as a community even if we individually disagree with what the community has said at that time.

Question: Would either of you like to comment on the pastoral implications of a decision one-way or the other? What is a pastorally appropriate response? What would it mean to be in a pastoral relationship with a couple, for example, whose marriage you would not solemnize?

Bishop Linda Nicholls

- We are talking about people who are our parishioners.
- We need to take seriously the pastoral responsibility to walk with that couple.
- If it has become possible for them to be married in the church
 - the pastoral responsibility is to be honest with the couple about where you are in not being able to officiate at their wedding and consider deeply the responsibility to refer couples to someone who could. But you are still their pastor.
 - If would be the same if a couple wants to have you officiate; see what is possible. We do currently have the possibility of blessing a civil marriage.



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Video 3: Living together with different views of marriage

Archbishop Fred Hiltz

- This is a question that will have to be discussed at considerable length in the meeting of the House of Bishop post General Synod 2019. Because we have a variety of practices across the church.
- It will be necessary to pay attention to relationships among Bishops; Diocesan boundaries are porous when it comes to people having their sacramental needs met.

Archbishop, could you comment on the ongoing place of clergy who have traditional views of marriage in the Canadian church?

- My quick response is yes. We are Anglican. We strive to be a church that's like that big tent. There is actually room for a variety of views. We need to make sure that we continue to nurture an attitude and an atmosphere where people who hold to a traditional view of marriage as being between a man and a woman, for life, that that view is not somehow inadequate. Or that it is somehow diminished because others have another view of marriage.
- I used to say a broader view but I don't think that is appropriate anymore. It's another view of marriage.
- We need to be attentive of the plea of those who hold a traditional view of marriage that they feel secure in their continuing place within the life of the Anglican Church of Canada.
- In the same breath, we need to find a way for folks who hold a traditional view of marriage to be able to say, "And there's space within this church for those who hold another view". The courtesy has to go both ways.

Conversation Starters

Did anything surprise you in this video? – OR - What feelings did this video stir up in you?

How does the statement that we need to find space within our church for those who hold another view of marriage – one that is different from our own – affect you? What might that mean for your congregation?



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Video 4: Conflict in congregations

Summary of Video Content *(3 minutes and 48 seconds long)*

Bishop Linda Nicholls encourages congregations to:

- Pray
- Engage in conversations about the views held in our congregation
- Ask how will live together with different views in our congregation

Question: Bishop Linda, what are the roles of congregations leading up to and after the vote at General Synod? How would you advise congregations to deal with conflict that already exists, and frankly, may get worse after the vote?

- My first quick response is prayer. Please pray for those who will be elected to represent our Diocese at General Synod, pray for the General Synod and the Council of General Synod as it seeks to prepare a way for us to hear one another.
- In dealing with conflict within your parishes, I hope and pray that your parish is engaging in an open and fair opportunity - for people to read (mark, learn and inwardly digest):
 - all that is being said across our church,
 - and the materials that have been presented.
 - and be able to have a conversation about the views that are held within your congregation.
- My sense is that some congregations have done that well and entered into that; there are others that have chosen not to have a conversation or have avoided it because they are afraid of the conflict.
- We should not be afraid to sit together - in prayer, in study - to listen to God and one another and understand why we find ourselves in different places. And then to ask how will we live together with different views in the same congregation.
- We need to know where our parish is and be gentle with one another in this process.

Conversation Starters

Did anything surprise you in this video? - OR - What feelings did this video stir up in you?

What is helping your congregation have conversations about differing views on marriage? What barriers exist and how might your congregation address them?



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Video 5: Leaving the Anglican Church after the vote

Summary of Video 5 Content (*4 minutes and 32 seconds long*)

Archbishop Fred Hiltz offers counsel to clerics and members of congregations about ways to respond if a parishioner decides to leave after the vote at General Synod in 2019. He encourages us to engage in conversation and always leave the door open for return.

Question: Archbishop Fred, some participants in our deanery gatherings have voiced the opinion that they will leave the Anglican Church of Canada if the vote does not go the way they wish. How would you respond to them? Do you think it will be possible for us, as a church, to walk together after General Synod?

- Well, that is the challenge isn't it.
- It is heartbreaking to hear that people feel they will be put in a place where they feel they have no choice but to leave. I would hear that with deep regret.
- Our response in those situations – here is where a strong ministry of presence and encouragement is required. Could we have some more conversation?
- Encourage them not to leave; if they do leave – where to?
- Invite them into conversation about everything they are leaving behind. How would their life as a disciple be bereft?
- Opportunity to engage one another in a conversation about what is the nature of communion
 - Surely it is not that we are of exactly the same mind on every single issue.
 - What is the nature of doctrine?
- If people choose to leave we have a responsibility to honour their decision.
 - The last word must always be, please remember that we are saddened by your decision. Please remember that the back light is always on, that door is always open, and the welcome mat lies there. We would be more than happy to see you come home.

Conversation Starters

Did anything surprise you in this video? OR What feelings did this video stir up in you?

What encourages, or challenges, you about the Primate's response to individuals who are contemplating leaving the Anglican Church if the vote at General Synod does not go the way they hope it will?