



Regional Consultation Meetings on Marriage Canon

Members of our four deaneries were invited to attend one of three regional consultation meetings held in April 2018 on the proposed changes to Marriage Canon 21. The theme for these regional consultations was "Understanding *This Holy Estate*: A Starting Point for Parish Conversations." The diocesan Canon 21 Steering Committee who planned these regional meetings chose to focus discussion at these meetings on the report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon because motion A054 passed by General Synod 2016 called "on the whole church to engage fully with *This Holy Estate* at every level" and on the biblical rationale presented in this report because feedback from the clergy day held in February indicated that more discussion on biblical passages relevant to this discussion was desired.

Bishop Michael Oulton began each of the meetings with a review of the General Synod resolution 2016, an overview of the agenda, diocesan norms, looking at a timeline prepared by the Diocese of Toronto that showed the history of discussions on same-sex relationships since the 1970's until today. The PowerPoint presentation used by Bishop Michael for this section of the meetings is available online.

The Rev Dr William Morrow, Professor of Hebrew Scripture at the School of Religion at Queen's University, spoke on the Biblical Interpretation in *This Holy Estate* (THE) dividing it into 5 sections with questions following each section that were discussed in table groups. These discussions had a limited scope of what could be accomplished in one evening, but a starting point for many in attendance.

The purpose of this section of the consultation meetings was to:

1. to help participants to understand what *This Holy Estate* offers as a biblical rationale for making a change to the Marriage Canon "to allow the marriage of same-sex couples in the same way as opposite-sex couples;" (THE, p. 1)
2. to encourage participants to arrive at their own conclusions about the strengths and weaknesses of the biblical rationale presented in THE; and
3. to become more aware of our church's theological diversity on this issue.

Those in attendance received a hard copy of a document prepared by the Rev. Dr. William Morrow with input from the Canon 21 steering committee entitled "Biblical Interpretation in *This Holy Estate*--Talking Points for Consultations in the Diocese of Ontario" is also available online. Questions discussed in table groups:

- 1. This Holy Estate on the Authority of Scripture.
Q. Which of the three approaches to interpreting scripture mentioned in THE most accords with yours? Can we be in the same church and interpret the Bible differently?
- 2. Marriage and the Creation Accounts.
Q. The conclusions of the authors of THE is that neither of the creation accounts contains information that allows readers to clearly define the institution of marriage. Do you agree?
- 3. Marriage in the New Testament
Q. If THE thinks that we should understand human marriage based on Christ's relationship with the church, what should a human marriage look like? Does Mark 10 have anything to contribute to this vision?

- 4. Romans 1 and the Question of Natural Law
 - Q. Critics are agreed that Paul's central concern in Romans 1 is not human sexuality; it is idolatry. When does human sexuality become symptomatic of idolatry?
- 5. Models for Same-Sex Marriage: Acts 10 and Same-Sex Covenants as a Differentiated Form of Christian Marriage Covenant (THE 5.3.3)
 - Q. If both heterosexual and same-sex marriages can equally reflect the element of self-giving that characterizes Christ's relationship to the church (Ephesians 5), does the call in THE for a somewhat distinct liturgy for the marriage of same-sex persons make sense?

Hastings & Quinte Deaneries met 17 April 2018 with 70 people in attendance.

Leeds & Grenville Deanery met 19 April 2018 with 50 people in attendance.

Frontenac Deanery met 25 April with 85 people in attendance.