



# *Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador*

## *The Anglican Church of Canada*

The Right Reverend Dr. Geoff Peddle, M.Div., Ph.D.  
Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

ANGLICAN DIOCESAN CENTRE  
19 King's Bridge Road  
St. John's, NL A1C 3K4  
Telephone: (709) 576-6697  
Fax: (709) 576-7122  
Email: [geoffpeddle48@gmail.com](mailto:geoffpeddle48@gmail.com)

October 4, 2019

My Dear People,

I write to you from the coast of Labrador where I am travelling this week following our Special Session of Synod for the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador on September 27 and 28. That Synod, the theme of which was “... *and the Greatest of these is Love* ...”, was held at St. Thomas' Church and the Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland in St. John's to discuss Marriage Equality. There were 127 voting delegates in attendance with 88% voting in favour of the following motion:

**This Synod of the Diocese accept and endorse affirmation #2 of “A Word to the Church” and the “local option” as set out in the declaration of the House of Bishops, and on that basis affirm the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese to allow parishes and congregations which formally request permission of him or her to perform same sex marriages to do so.**

That decision now means that in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador the Sacrament of Marriage can now be offered to all couples who are able to be married according to civil law, irrespective of gender. Same-sex marriage is now part of our church's ministry. My letter to you today will be relatively brief but if you want more information on our Diocesan Synod please speak with members of our clergy or lay delegates who attended. My [Charge to Synod](#) also provides background information on our journey together and is available online at our diocesan website under “Bishop's Writings.”



A Special Session of Diocesan Synod was necessary so that an appropriate decision at the local level could be made for our church in Newfoundland and Labrador following the failure of the Anglican Church of Canada to agree to a change in our Marriage Canon at its General Synod in Vancouver in July. Even before our Synod met, eight parishes of this Diocese formally requested permission to affirm Marriage Equality following a motion of their Parish Council or Congregation at their Annual General Meeting and so it was imperative that our Diocese decide for itself. Quoting from my Charge to Synod, the motion we passed “affirms the authority of this bishop and future bishops to act pastorally and appropriately on a parish-by-parish basis on the matter of Marriage Equality.” Eight parishes (out of 38) were given permission at the end of Synod to marry same-sex couples and a ninth parish was given permission this week with additional parishes indicating their intention to also seek approval.

A fresh liturgy for marriage has now been prepared in our Diocese and I thank the Reverends Mark Nichols and Jonathan Rowe for their fine work on that. It is almost identical to what we are familiar with in the Book of Alternative Services and changes only a few words so that it not be gender-specific and is inclusive for all. It will shortly be available for purchase at our Diocesan Resource Centre and available online from the Diocese. Couples who have been previously married civilly and who wish the blessing of God upon their union may now receive a blessing upon their marriage in our church also. There is already a liturgy for the “Blessing of Civil Marriage” in the Anglican Church of Canada and it can be adapted to that purpose. Weddings and Blessings under the auspices of our church and performed by our clergy are religious ceremonies and all policies and guidelines currently in place to ensure appropriate reverence and dignity (e.g., sacred music, scripture readings) remain unchanged.

I believe the decision of our Synod is a good thing for our church because it makes room for all even if there continues to be a diversity of viewpoints on marriage among Anglicans. As I stated in my Charge to Synod, “... nobody will be compelled to do anything that is against their conscience and their faith. Let us be generous toward each other ... even if we might disagree on this matter ... This is a time for us to show grace and understanding and be reminded of the mystery of God’s love.”

The Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador has now decisively moved forward to fully include LGBTQ2S+ persons by affirming Marriage Equality. We are bigger today than yesterday and for that I am grateful. Let us journey together in the fellowship of the Holy Gospel and in the Spirit of God’s Love for all.

With my every blessing,

+*Geoffrey*



**ANGLICAN EAST NL**