

TEXT OF LETTER SENT TO SIX PARISHES IN THE DIOCESE OF NEW WESTMINSTER
AUTHORIZING A RITE OF BLESSING OF COMMITTED SAME SEX COUPLES:

Diocese of New Westminster
Anglican Church of Canada
The Right Reverend Michael Ingham, Bishop
#580-401 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5A1

Memorandum

May 23, 2003

Dear Friends in Christ:

Please find enclosed a Rite for the Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Covenants which I am authorizing for use in the Parish of [Parish Name] in accordance with Motion 7 of the Synod of the Diocese of New Westminster 2002.

This is not a marriage ceremony, but a blessing of permanent and faithful commitments between persons of the same sex in order that they may have the support and encouragement of the church in their lives together under God.

In taking this step, the diocese is affirming our belief “as Christians that homosexual persons are created in the image and likeness of God and have a full and equal claim, with all other persons, upon the love, acceptance, concern and pastoral care of the church. The gospel of Jesus Christ compels Christians to guard against all forms of human injustice and to affirm that all persons are brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.” (Canadian House of Bishops Guidelines, October 1997)

Homosexual persons, like all persons, take strength and comfort from the overwhelming witness of Scripture to the unconditional love of God. The Bible urges the church to put into practice the compassion of Jesus towards all who suffer prejudice, discrimination and rejection because of their particular human differences and uniqueness. This Rite of Blessing is one response to that clear biblical imperative.

Couples who seek this service of the church should be adequately prepared and instructed by the clergy beforehand, and supported and sustained by the Christian community afterwards. In offering its care in this way, the church recognizes that homosexual couples face the same challenges and share the same responsibilities as other people in living out the costly demands of love. Our purpose is to encourage and strengthen fidelity and mutual supportiveness in family life on which the stability of our wider society depends.

Thank you for your willingness to extend the church’s pastoral ministry in this way. May God grant joy and prosperity to all who rightfully receive it.

Kindest regards,

The Right Reverend Michael Ingham

Bishop