

Anglican Church of Canada takes step toward allowing same-sex weddings

by [Ron Csillag](#) and [Christian Century staff](#)

This article appears in the [August 31, 2016](#) issue.

In the first step of a two-step process, Canada's Anglican Church voted to amend its rules to allow clergy to celebrate same-sex marriages.

The General Synod will vote again on the measure at its next gathering in 2019. If it passes, the Canadian church will join the Episcopal Church, which formally approved marriage ceremonies regardless of gender in 2015. As a consequence, the Anglican Communion placed temporary restrictions on the Episcopal Church.

At first it appeared that more than 200 delegates attending the General Synod meeting north of Toronto had voted to reject same-sex marriage by a single vote. It was later discovered that the electronic voting system had miscoded a vote. The revised tally showed that the measure passed.

To pass, the resolution required two-thirds support from each of the three orders, or bodies, within the church: laity, clergy, and bishops.

In 2004, the church affirmed the "integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships." A year later, the Canadian government legalized same-sex marriage.

Some bishops have said they will approve same-sex marriages, citing a ruling that the church's marriage canon does not explicitly prohibit them, said Matt Gardner, a church communications officer.

Archbishop Fred Hiltz, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, told the *Anglican Journal* that he does not have authority over diocesan bishops in this matter.

Some bishops are "under huge pressure from their parishes and their clergy to proceed" with same-sex marriage, Hiltz told the *Anglican Journal*. "There is a part of me, I think, that would say, given their pastoral context, I understand where they are coming from."

At the same time, a group of bishops released a letter on July 15 expressing concern about protections for dioceses, clergy, and congregation that oppose same-sex marriage.

“We believe that our General Synod has erred grievously and we publicly dissent from this decision,” they wrote. Passing the resolution “imperils our full communion within the Anglican Church of Canada and with Anglicans throughout the world.”

—Religion News Service; the *Christian Century* staff