

CHURCHES HAVE CHANGED

A Supplement to

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION:

EVOLVING REFLECTIONS

A Submission to the Anglican Church of Canada's
Commission on the Marriage Canon

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One objection to allowing same-sex marriage is that biblical injunctions are unchanging and that churches must not allow changes that violate biblical injunctions. But churches have not always seen biblical injunctions as unchanging. Churches, including those in the Anglican community, have changed rules. Let me give some examples.

Based on biblical passages in the New Testament Christian churches condemned, killed and persecuted Jews. The Anglican community today along with other Christian churches have repented of those actions.

Based on Paul's injunction to slaves to obey their masters, churches supported slavery. The Anglican Church in England has officially apologized for its support for the slave trade. Anglicans today universally condemn slavery.

Using the rationale that artificial contraception is "against nature" the Anglican bishops in the 1920s and 1930s strictly condemned artificial contraception. Anglicans no longer condemn artificial contraception.

Paul prohibited women from teaching and preaching. The Anglican Church of Canada now ordains women priests.

Based on the quotes on Jesus' teaching on divorce divorced persons were prohibited from marrying in the Church. The Anglican Church of Canada now allows re-marriage of divorced persons.

Christian beliefs were used to justify the forced removal of aboriginal children from their families and placing them in residential schools to assimilate them into mainstream Canadian society by adopting Christianity and speaking English or French. That practice of Anglican missionaries removing them from their families, depriving them of their ancestral languages, sterilization, and exposing many of them to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of staff and other students did great harm. The Anglican Church of Canada now recognizes that practice as a horrent and abusive. The Church has apologized and paid some financial compensation.

Today most Anglicans agree with these changes. They recognize that these changes reflect not simply changing social mores or fashion but see them as just, reasonable and consistent with a broader view of the Gospel of love, compassion, mercy and justice. This same perspective can support marriage between same-sex couples.