

I should begin by saying that I take a conservative view of marriage, that marriage is a union between a man and woman, and where possible, implies the conceiving and raising of children.

This view, I understand, places the Church under considerable difficulties at present. There is both institutional and personal pressures that as Christians we feel deeply in holding such a position. Now more than ever, a traditional view of marriage is bound to place us in conflict with the world around us, with people we care about, and members of our community, both near and far. I take no pleasure in holding dissonant view in this regard, but it is difficult to see how the marriage canon can be modified to include same sex relationships without significant alteration to our Scriptural and communal commitments as Christians.

At the same time, it is also true that reforming the canon to include same sex relationships will place our national church in similar difficulties in our relationships to the global Anglican Communion and many of our ecumenical partners. On a smaller scale, as has already been the case, a decision to move forward will bring formal divisions into our parishes and dioceses.

Of course, for those who regard the change of the canon as moral and spiritual imperative, these inevitable divisions will be bearable in light of the greater calling to include a marginalized portion of our society. For me, however, the risk, at this time, is too great, in part because there remains no consensus that the marriage of same sex people can be rooted securely in the Scriptures. Though arguments have certainly been made in this respect, it is difficult to see how same sex marriage can be considered Scriptural without running against the grain of the text, and the generally received habits of reading that exist within our tradition.

In light of this uncertainty, it would seem wise and prudent to acknowledge the dangers of adopting an entirely novel reading of the Bible, especially if it means formally placing the Anglican Church at odds with the global communion and the wider Christian Church. Discerning the guidance of the Spirit surely cannot ignore these fundamental considerations concerning an issue that is so critical for Christian faith.

Those who hold a conservative view do need to acknowledge that the burden of this position may fall heavily on our gay brothers and sisters in Christ. To this, there is no easy answer, but that we must remain committed to one another, the life of discipleship and the way of the cross which leads to the healing of the world. This is not a calling that is directed more heavily to one group or another, but claims us all as members of Christ's body.

I am deeply concerned for the future of our Church, our witness to Christ among the nations and the incredible strain that is currently felt by everyone in the Anglican Church of Canada. It is through faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that we are bound to one another. I hope and pray that this bond will not be broken.

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