

Submission for the Commission on the Marriage Canon

I am in full support of LGBTQ Anglicans and their right to full, Christian marriage in the Anglican Church. For me, this is a justice issue. If I, as a heterosexual Anglican can be married, then to not allow my LGBTQ brothers and sisters to do so is to delegate them to the status of second-class citizens. A civil blessing is a slap in the face and denigrates the love and commitment that clearly exists in the same-sex relationships of my LGBTQ friends. It sends a very strong message that God doesn't in fact love LGBTQ Christians enough to welcome the love that they have for each other.

As a theological summary, I will quote from the last page in Daniel Helmeniak's "What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality":

"While the Bible makes no blanket condemnation of homogenital acts and even less of homosexuality, this does not mean that for lesbians and gay men anything goes. If they rely on the Bible for guidance and inspiration, lesbians and gay men will certainly feel bound by the core moral teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition: be prayerful, reverence God, respect others, be loving and kind, be forgiving and merciful, be honest and just. Work for harmony and peace. Stand up for truth. Give of yourself for all that is good, and avoid all that you know to be evil. To do that is to follow God's way. [...] Living by the Bible, gay and lesbian people will submit to those severe moral requirements – and those requirements apply also to sex and intimate relationships. That is all that can honestly be said about biblical teaching on homosexuality. If people would still seek to know outright if gay or lesbian sex in itself is good or evil, if homogenital acts per se are right or wrong, they will have to look somewhere else for an answer. **For the fact of the matter is simple enough. The Bible never addresses that question. More than that, the Bible seems deliberately unconcerned about it.**"
(Helmeniak, p. 132, emphasis mine)

Sufficed to say, then, the issue of marriage between homosexual Christians is the same as that for heterosexual Christians. There is no conflict between the purposes outlined in the marriage canon in application to same-sex marriage.

Reflecting upon my Old and New Testament courses that I have just completed, I see that the arguments against same-sex marriage represent ancient cultural norms rather than God's vision for human relationships. By not acknowledging the cultural contexts of the various passages, scripture has been used as a weapon of oppression rather than a life-giving, life-affirming message from God. If we do not differentiate between these cultural descriptions from the voice of love found in the Scriptures, then we will have nothing to offer anyone.

These ancient cultures did not have the biological knowledge that we have today and were dealing with issues unique to their own cultures. Thus, trying to adopt the gender norms of an ancient culture is completely inappropriate. Given the overwhelming amount of scientific study regarding LGBTQ issues and the lack of actual condemnation

in the Bible, we need to acknowledge what God is clearly doing in our world. We need to see that same-sex marriage is not an abomination or a “slippery slope”. We need to acknowledge that same-sex relationships have the same dynamics that heterosexual ones have. We need to let go of the tiresome stereotypes about same-sex relationships. We need to allow LGBTQ believers to have the same marriage rights as heterosexual believers do. Marriage as a sacrament is for the blessing of a union by God. It is not a means of social control for the church. It is a cause for celebration for those whom God has clearly drawn together.

This discussion has been going on for over a decade. I know that my own diocese and parish are in full support of this motion. The time for debate is over. We should amend Canon XXI to allow same-sex couples to be married in the same way as heterosexual couples. The outlined “conscience clause” will give those who disagree freedom to go their separate ways on this issue while not infringing on the wishes of others.

Yours respectfully,

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