

Marriage commission submission from Dr. John Rye

Key Points

1. **Jesus is the way, the truth and the light. We have not been given a set of golden rules or laws deliberately. Civil leaders from Nero to now have not been given ‘the light’ but have been given authority, and we are called to be a prophetic church.**
2. **The loudest views heard in this debate are solely urban and educated. This commission needs to hear the views of the frozen north and the global south, and listen.**
3. **After thirty years, we need to decide definitively a single definition for all Anglicans everywhere.**
4. **That decision needs to be taken on the basis of scripture, reason and tradition (in that order)**
5. **I believe that discussion has been poisoned by intimidation on both sides. No one in the GLBT community I know at all deeply as a friend or a patient has not had physical or extreme verbal attack; no one who runs a small business or has tenure in education can freely talk on these issues, whatever they believe. Our conclusions do not provide cover for violence anywhere.**
6. **The ideal is for each child to be cared for under God by both biological parents. Sometimes, this ideal cannot be met and God provides other means-thank you Grandmothers for Grandmothers. The founders of the Anglican Church used the phrase ‘marry’ to describe the commitment of two people to care for each other and their children under God. Language changes over time, and we may need a new word to describe this relationship.**
7. **I completely agree with and have therefore not repeated the theological statements from ACA and the PBS. I refer readers to the comments of Gene Packwood and Rosanne Kydd who literally has written the book on it.**

Who am I? ‘Jesus is the way the truth and the light’, is the theme of my answer to this issue and, I hope, my life. I’d like to write a deep fifteen page article or even a book for you, but Rosanne Kydd has done that already, so I will stay with something short and readable.

Let’s start with who I am. I live in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, where the fields meet the forest. I am part of St. George’s Anglican Church, part of a multi-point parish on the southern boundary of the Council of the North. Our congregation is partly aboriginal; as is our ministry team and we use mostly prayer book services on Sundays. We have just had a renewal weekend with Gene Packwood, we have prayer and praise on Tuesdays, and scouts and AA use our building.

Our diocese is a mixture of small southern rural communities and northern reserves; the electorate is mixed too and I am privileged to represent it in Ottawa. Our skies are beautiful and I see wildlife on a regular basis. But our seasons can be unforgiving, so we need to work together to get things done. Flaming arguments are a city luxury, for out here you don’t know who will need to rescue you

tomorrow; it's very different from London, England from where we moved thirty years ago. Here, folks will nod, go quiet, leave and come back another day as if nothing had happened.

I am married with three children, two of which had weddings in the last two years. My wife is a nurse and I am a family physician, with some part time teaching on end of life issues in the programme to train rural family doctors. I first saw lesbian sex, and rabbits eating their young, in my grandfather's chicken house. He said that they did that because they were overstressed and overcrowded. He also said that could happen to people too. My grandmother made great roast chicken. But enough about me- let's look at the questions.

What do I believe on the questions posed?

"It's not about you," says Rick Warren at the start of one of his books. Mostly, when this question is asked, it's so the hearer can pigeon hole you rather than because they really want to know, but you don't need to do that because I've given helpful bullet points at the top. Seriously though, I am a white haired English guy, with English accent and higher education, at serious risk of turning into C.S.Lewis, and I believe....."It's not about me" This is the twenty first century and we will make the same mistakes- slavery, eugenics, rezs- as we have before if urban elites, like me, alone set the tone and enforce with the best of motives, today's popular theory.

So, I believe that in addition to Hooker triad summarised in the appendix below of Scripture. Reason and Tradition, we should listen to and seriously consider what our elders (aboriginal, veterans and others) and the global south has to say. We should find out what has happened in ELIC to congregations and finances, and how dioceses which have implemented this have coped. In short, we should actually do all the things in the motion (appendix one). And watch the chickens.

I believe that our activities need to be evidence based-that's the medical me-and we should use volunteer time and money wisely-been to too many meetings where the minutes were kept and the hours lost. Thinking thusly, should remind us that the Church internationally is growing faster than population, and that this growth should encourage us to look at why the church in Africa, and South Asia, and inner city London is growing, when we struggle.(Hint: you don't need to go to these places, Jesus will bring visitors and immigrants to you. Toronto is the first city where there is no single race pre dominant)

About this point, listeners rattle cups or wander off. But some say, "And when you have listened what did they say?"

•How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?

Marriage is the lifetime commitment of one man and one woman to each other, and is intended to be the only legitimate expression of sexual activity. It is intended to illustrate to us mortals, Jesus relationship with us the people of God, and to provide a safe environment for children's growth and nurture. And children are more important to Jesus than we know (a big picture of Jesus welcoming the children is over the door to our church building)

Just as our bodies some time get sick, or our churches drift off into heresy and schism, sometimes marriages don't live up to the initial hopes (Anne, the very first Anglican queen ,had her head chopped off-how abusive is that?) and that's not a surprise to God but no one starts that way.

•How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?

If this were an exam, I would write a few paragraphs that would amplify the summary so excellently given in the prayer book, and might suggest plagiarism from other contributors. I doubt I have anything original to say that has not been said a million times before-God loves children so passionately and hates self-independence so vermently, that He will only entrust children to two dissimilar people who give themselves unreservedly to each other, if only for minutes.

But this isn't an exam so my heart answer is: I understand the theological significance of gender differences in marriage by exposure to infallible scripture in liturgy and reading, by the interaction with other couples both older and younger, by reading what others have written and by constant practice. Theology detached from life is either legalism or a fantasy game.

•Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?

There is a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage just as there is a distinction between taking an oath in court and saying the Apostles creed, signing a driving license or tax return and affirming the solemn declaration of 1893 and the thirty nine articles.

The former expects a minimum, but attainable, level of performance with escalating penalties if they are not met. The latter acts as a brake on mission drift, but expresses aspirations which cannot be universally met. Listening to Truth and Reconciliation reports doesn't make it easy to affirm that the "Church is Holy and Apostolic" but it is. Nevertheless saying the creed each Sunday or expressing our commitment to each baptism candidate or new bishop that we will support them in the apostle's teaching and fellowship acts as a gyroscope bringing us back to true north..

Civil marriage changes with the law and in a country aspiring to be multicultural, it must cover a variety of beliefs and practices, some of which are crazy or mistaken. There is no philosophical reason why a civil marriage should only include two people, or exclude incest, or disallow marriage to a company (which are legal persons) except the desires of the people, the vision of the leaders and the competence of the courts.

If a community regards itself as under God's dominion, and the ruler and people want to be Christian, then legal and Christian marriage will come into focus and the two may correspond closely. That has not been my experience or the experience of most Christians in most ages, and I don't think I want to live in a theocracy. It has been the experience of those living on some Northern reserves in our diocese.

What was it like to be part of this process?

I wanted to write something long and studious, but I felt instead the Spirit wanted me to share in a conversational style. I really did make a pot of herbal tea and pour a cup for you and one for me.

I feel honoured to be at the General Synods in Winnipeg in 2007 and 2013, and aware that trust had been put in me. If in some small way, I can remind people of bits of scripture forgotten, or speak for the forgotten people then I have done my part. As Bishop Parsons in Ottawa echoed Bishop Masters in the 1980s, we are a deeply divided church. Are we a reformation church trusting the Word, or are we a cultural expression of 'niceness'?

At both synods, I was intentionally seated with those whose views are opposite to mine. I think we went beyond courtesy to respect, without compromising principles. I hope this happens again.

I know that many clergy felt legally exposed particularly in the North to court action if they held to the teaching of the church. For a few, new immigrants, loss of license could mean repatriation and death.

I realize that a definite decision would either alienate some in civil society or have us disaffiliated from Lambeth and tea with the Queen . It seems easier to muddle on, but it isn't. I see the faces of those that have left, our parish both because we went too far and not far enough. I see the faces of the wonderful teen Christians at camp and wonder who will keep the faith at college . I don't see the faces of those who never came, who never built the relations in good times so they were ready to ask for help in crisis . We need a decision in 2016. I hope it's No but it needs to be settled. Its tie break time.

And so I supported and stand by the motion below. They called the alumni from Essentials that supported this motion 'Wuzzys' . Whether this refers to Scrooge's good mentor, Mr. Fuzzywiggle or to the Zulu warriors at Rourke's crossing, I carry the name with joy.

Dr John Rye from Saskatchewan

Appendix 1: The resolution carried at general Synod in Ottawa in 2013 (which I was on the resolutions committee for, and spoke in favour of)

The amended resolution which reads:

That this General Synod direct the Council of General Synod to prepare and present a motion at General Synod 2016 to change Canon XXI on Marriage to allow the marriage of same sex couples in the same way as opposite sex couples, and that this motion should include a conscience clause so that no member of the clergy, bishop, congregation or diocese should be constrained to participate in or authorize such marriages against the dictates of their conscience.

This motion will also include supporting documentation that:

- a) demonstrates broad consultation in its preparation;
- b) explains how this motion does not contravene the Solemn Declaration;

c) confirms immunity under civil law and the Human Rights Code for those bishops, dioceses and priests who refuse to participate in or authorize the marriage of same-sex couples on the basis of conscience;

d) provides a biblical and theological rationale for this change in teaching on the nature of Christian marriage

was put and was CARRIED

Appendix 2: The submission of the ACA, of which I am a member and fully agree

The Anglican Communion Alliance offers its submission to the Marriage Commission with gratitude for this opportunity to express its position on the subject of changing the marriage canon.

The ACA is an organization that works within the Anglican Church of Canada to affirm classical Anglican orthodoxy. Symbolized by the three-legged stool, it stands on the authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

In keeping, therefore, with

*Scripture—Jesus' teaching on lifelong marriage between a man and a woman,

*Anglican Tradition—as seen in the Solemn Declaration, its traditional liturgy (the Book of Common Prayer and the Book of Alternative Services), and

*Reason—that supports the marital union of one man and one woman as a social and religious unit for the procreation and nurture of its children,

ACA upholds the biblical view that marriage consists of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others for life.

Respectfully submitted by,

Roseanne Kydd, PhD, Chair ACA

PS They said that you would never read all this because the commission was packed with supporters of SSM. But you did! Thank you

John Rye