

Submission to the Commission on the Marriage Canon
Ms. Joan Alexander
Diocese of Niagara
September 22, 2014

**“Love one another with mutual affection;
outdo one another in showing honour.”**
Romans 12:10 (NRSV)

I write this submission as an active member of the Anglican Church of Canada. I am also a civilly married lesbian woman who has received a same-sex blessing in my church community. In addition to the commissioners, I address this correspondence with love and understanding to all those who submit (or keep within their own hearts) their thoughts, hopes and wishes in regard to this matter.

I do not understand the gender difference in marriage as it pertains to theology. Therefore, I do not see the relevance in this context.

What is the distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage, I wonder? I can speak to the difference between civil marriage and Anglican sacramental marriage. When my partner and I, both active Anglicans, came to accept that our relationship was serious, that there was a boundless amount of love within it, that although incredibly challenging to consider what the future would hold, we began to discuss a lifetime commitment. Now, we are not “young”. I have adult children, we have careers, and we had both been alone for years with many separate personal and professional experiences. This was a life-changing time in both of our lives! Our diocese (Niagara) offered same-sex blessings for civilly married couples. And so, although we had friends and colleagues in the church who supported our sexual orientation and decision to marry, by necessity, we went outside of our church to be civilly married. Other than two witnesses, we did not have any family or friends with us as we stood in a small non-denominational wedding chapel with an officiant neither of us knew. Several months later we were in an Anglican community that openly celebrated our relationship and a same-sex blessing ceremony was held in the sanctuary. Some family members, friends, and several curious people attended. It was a happy day! My Spiritual Director said recently, “You are fortunate to have two anniversaries to celebrate.” Really? I wonder.

The marriage canon, in part and in relation to my marriage, states “the purpose of marriage is mutual fellowship, support, and comfort...the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of faithful love”. The difference between marriage and the relationship blessing is presented in my personal story above. I respectfully ask you to consider why I should have two anniversaries to celebrate when one would be more than sufficient.

I understand the sacramentality of marriage to be a receiving of grace, a sacred union and a powerful binding. Again, I ask you to prayerfully consider why I am not worthy to receive this sacrament.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Joan Alexander