



## **St John the Divine Anglican Church**

Parish Submission to the Commission on the Marriage Canon

To:

Commission on Marriage Canon  
Anglican Church of Canada  
80 Hayden Street  
Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2

From:

The Parishioners,  
The Church of St. John the Divine  
1611 Quadra Street  
Victoria, B. C. V8W 2L5

Dear Members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and a recommendation regarding changes to Canon XXI. Here are the responses to the questions and points you asked along with our recommendation on moving forward

The following submission was the only agenda item at a Special Vestry convened on September 28, 2014. At that meeting the submission was approved by a major of the parishioners.

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How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?

*A patriarchal environment shaped how the scriptures were written. Marriage predates the scriptures. In biblical times we had consideration of economic purposes, to support alliances, increasing wealth and land, and to insure the continuation of the family line. Through the course of the scriptures and church history, our understanding of marriage has changed, for example from polygamy to monogamy, from a position of dominance and subservience to an equal partnership.*

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

*Back in time it was part of a societal norm. Theology was an attempt to rationalize those mores.*

Is there a difference between civil and Christian marriage?



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*Are we talking about weddings or are we are talking about marriage as a relationship? If it is about a wedding—then a civil wedding is performed on behalf of a state, province or country; a Christian wedding is a public service of the church, where couples are united before God according to the laws of a particular denomination, while respecting the laws of the land. In either case it formalizes a relationship in the eyes of state and/or church.*

The marriage canon describes “the purpose of marriage” as mutual fellowship, support and comfort; the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children; and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of faithful love. What is the theological significance of:

Companionship in marriage? *It is a reflection on the passage in Genesis 2:18 where it says that it is not good for man to be alone. It is the love between a couple that reflects the love of Christ for his church.*

Bearing and raising children? *We are all children of God by adoption. The marriage service is permissive with respect to children. From the beginning of time one of the goals of marriage was to provide a stable environment to raise children. The provision of such an environment can be done by diverse family units.*

The relationship between marriage and sexuality:  
*Sexuality is a gift given to couples by God, it plays an important role, enriching the marriage relationship . . . it is an expression of love and God is love.*

What is the difference between marriage and blessing of a relationship?

*In the Anglican Church marriage is a sacrament and the blessing of the relationship is the church recognizing that relationship. The blessing of the couple should be a choice a couple can make, not what has to be chosen because of the gender of the couple.*

How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?

*A sacrament is an outward visible sign of an inward invisible grace. The inward invisible grace of the marriage is the couple’s love for each other.*

A suggestion follows with respect to how we believe the church should proceed with change—make the minimum change possible to the Canons; this would provide for the least drastic change.

*We urge change to regulations and procedures, such as gender restrictions.  
We recommend that there be a conscience clause.*