

A response to the request for submissions

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The Commission's suggested questions:

- How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?
- How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?
- Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?
- The marriage canon describes "the purposes 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 fulfilment in a community of faithful love. What is the theological significance of:
  - companionship in marriage?
  - bearing and raising children?
  - the relationship between marriage and sexuality?
- What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?
- How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?

I want to say first that I am a highly trained theologian and might be comfortable with answering those questions if they were asked in a world in which churches were not losing their LGBT members and in which LGBT Christians were not abandoning their faith and their church in order to live happier lives.

But we live in a world in which the church is dying, and in which it makes no sense to exile the faithful because of their sexual orientation. Thirty or forty years ago, LGBT Christians were not expected to leave, we were expected to be invisible. In 2014, LGBT people in Canada are no longer willing or able to be invisible. We are far more likely to leave the Church than to subject ourselves to unhealthy messages of mere tolerance of our differences rather than affirmation of our creation in the image of God.

In this context, the Church must decide whether it would rather make us disappear or affirm our full humanity. Perhaps the commission could ask themselves the question recently posed by Pope Francis, "Who am I to judge?", and the problematic nature of their questions would become clear.

I suggest that the most wholesome template for the next move of the Anglican Church of Canada can be seen in the Truth and Reconciliation process. The situations are parallel. Dehumanizing structures and deeds have been implicitly and explicitly sanctioned by our church. People have been driven mad, lived unnecessarily guilt ridden, addicted and loveless lives and even died because of our actions. Our church must undergo metanoia, repent, and reconcile with those who are willing to come forward.

In this process, the revision of the marriage canon becomes one of a number of steps along a path foretold by Micah, who said "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." It is time for the Anglican Church to walk humbly.