

September 29th, 2014

Canon Robert Falby
Chairperson
Commission on the Marriage Canon
80 Hayden Street
Toronto, ON M4Y 3G2

Dear Commission Members:

We write concerning altering the Marriage Canon to make provision for the Declaration of Holy Matrimony of same-sex couples. It is not our intention to again review the biblical arguments pertaining marriage and homosexuality but rather we will address the human condition in all of this. We will end with a statement of where our observations have led us.

As long time Anglicans, we begin by affirming that we welcome all sinners into the Anglican Church of Canada. We also affirm that acknowledging one is a sinner and in a broken relationship with God is indeed a prerequisite to being a Christian. We also acknowledge that by virtue of our Free Will, and the ability to choose right from wrong, we are prone to grave error and must continually be introspective and measure our acts to test if they are consistent with Christ's teachings or only with our own wishes.

The Bible does make clear what constitutes sin and we must be cautious to not try and change the definition however attractive and well-meaning this may be and however righteous and generous it may make us feel. With regard to marriage and sexual sin we hold that all sexual intercourse other than that between a man and a woman in the context of Holy Matrimony constitutes sin. We also hold that sexual encounters within Christian marriages are sinful insofar as they are not consistent with love, caring and mutuality. This seems entirely scripturally consistent.

Based upon reflection we observe that it is very human to try and justify our erroneous actions rather than own them. We humans also frequently go through great machinations to declare ourselves victimized and thus not responsible for our current state. It is very comforting to us to have company in our brokenness. All too often we too have found that we make judgements based on our emotions and feelings and all too often we find that our feelings have guided us into significant error. Feelings are highly unreliable, often portend unbalanced judgements and need to be tempered with Reason. God gave us a head as well as a heart. *Mea Culpa!*

The Anglican Church, as a human institution, has always acknowledged that it is prone to error and made provision for this in the Thirty-Nine Articles; most notably Articles XX, XXI, XXIII and

XXVI. Related to this tendency to err it is worth observing that should the Anglican Church of Canada, by virtue of its ecclesiastical polity, change its Marriage Canon to allow for same-sex marriage that this does not automatically make such a change consistent God's will. Not infrequently and for many very human reasons, Christians in the pew have been led astray by church authorities. Conversely, church authorities, not infrequently, have been led astray by the zeitgeist prevailing in the pews. As social animals we do have a tendency to 'Go along to get along' rather than think and act independently.

Thomas a Kempis in the 14th/15th century observed "Man proposes; God disposes" – an entirely reasonable proposition for an omnipotent and omniscient God. Let us check our individual 'still small voices' and ensure we are not turning this statement on its head such that it now reads "God Proposes; Man Disposes" and we have granted ourselves God-like properties much as Adam and Eve sought. We fear that this might be the case.

With humility, we conclude that it is not appropriate to change the Marriage Canon as we cannot, based on evidence and balanced scholarship and ignoring the prolific emotional rhetoric, conclude that such would be consistent with Christian teaching. We thus urge both the Commission and the next General Synod to reject any motion to change the Marriage Canon while also affirming that all sinners are welcome in the Anglican Church of Canada and admonishing those members inclined to be unwelcoming to any sinners. That said, we also acknowledge that to be loving to an individual sometimes requires that we do not endorse what that individual seeks.

Yours in Christ,

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