

I have spent the morning reading submissions to the marriage canon online. I've read a lot of opinions and arguments about scripture and definitions. As I thought about what I wanted to add, I felt myself wanting to jump on scripture too. I wanted to write about how the Spirit has moved people to depart from known scripture or social norms and follow the call to include more people into the body of Christ. A very smart theologian taught me how Paul and the Council of Jerusalem departed, fairly radically, from the requirement of circumcision for Christian converts. The Spirit was leading the church elsewhere, and the Council felt called to depart from scripture and social norms.

Of the few submissions I read I didn't see a personal narrative among the submissions. So I have decided to add my own story. Christianity for me is deeply relational, it's about how we are connected to each other's lives. So as vulnerable as it is to share our stories, and my own story, for me it's one of the deepest expressions of faith.

I was raised in an amazing affirming Anglican church in downtown Toronto. Despite a very positive experience as a child I left the church in my later high school years after learning about the oppression and violence the church perpetuated historically, and continues to perpetuate. I also discovered I was attracted to women and began to self identify as queer.

In university I was invited to volunteer at an Anglican church for an after school youth program. I started to volunteer with Christian Harvey, the youth minister at St John's in Peterborough. I realized I really enjoyed working with the high school youth. Christian asked me if I would apply for the Youth Ministry Apprenticeship Program. My biggest fear when considering to apply wasn't if I would feel overwhelmed working with street involved youth. It wasn't my lack of knowledge about scripture, or having to start a brand new youth program on my own. My biggest fear was experiencing homophobia in the church.

Christian was honest and said he couldn't guarantee that I wouldn't experience homophobia but he, unequivocally, invited me to the table of belonging in the church. His actions embody Christ's teachings to invite all those, especially the marginalized and oppressed, to be an integral part of one body and really *feel* that sense of belonging. It's been almost five years now

since I decided to do the Youth Ministry Apprenticeship Program and I have been working in youth ministry for the church ever since.

I enjoyed Rev Maggie Helwig's submission which calls into question the church being involved sacramentally in marriage at all. But if the church is going to continue to marry people, the question I ask myself personally is: can I really be a part of a church that doesn't see me as an equal member? The message to exclude same-sex couples amounts to rejection. We are not being seen as equal members of the church. I have had really close friends leave the Anglican church because of homophobia. As a 28 year old most of my peers and friends don't see the church as a viable place to practice faith because of exclusionary attitudes and practices. And I have the same questions myself.

The Anglican church has a chance to embody and live out Christ's message of radical inclusion right now. What is the Spirit saying to you?

Sincerely,

Rosemary MacAdam

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*obviously this is my own personal story and does not represent my parish or area