

Some thoughts on the Work of the Marriage Commission

The Marriage Commission was formed to carry out the task of implementing 2013 General Synod's Resolution C003. I have some concerns about the work of fulfilling their mandate.

The first requirement was to prepare a motion for the 2016 General Synod to change the Marriage Canon to include same-sex marriages. The difficult part of the assignment is to fulfill the rest of the mandate, providing supporting documentation as follows:

“This motion will also include supporting documentation that:

- a) demonstrates broad consultation in its preparation;
- b) explains how this motion does not contravene the Solemn Declaration;
- c) confirms immunity under civil law and the Human Rights Code for those bishops, dioceses and priests who refuse to participate in or authorize the marriage of same-sex couples on the basis of conscience; and
- d) provides a biblical and theological rationale for this change in teaching on the nature of Christian marriage.”

The proposed motion will include supporting documentation that demonstrates broad consultation in its preparation. This exercise in consultation is a good beginning but further consultation needs to be carried out as the draft motion and supporting documents are prepared. Also, there seems to be little response from our aboriginal brothers and sisters, and they must be heard.

The next part of the motion is to explain how this motion does not contravene the Solemn Declaration of 1893, the basis of the Anglican Church of Canada. The declaration reads “We, the Bishops , together with the Delegates from the Clergy and Laity -----declare that this Church to be, and desire that it continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world---- (Book of Common Prayer, page viii) . Our Church is one of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion, but 22 of these provinces and the majority of Anglicans worldwide are in Impaired Communion with us and our Church because people with same-sex attractions have been included in the clergy of a number of

Canadian dioceses. Impaired Communion means that these actions are not biblically based and so not acceptable for Anglican Christians.

The third part requiring supporting documentation is to confirm immunity under civil law and the Human Rights Code for those bishops, dioceses and priests who refuse to participate in or authorize the marriage of same-sex couples on the basis of conscience. This is mandatory and yet, cannot be guaranteed by a church that no longer supports traditional marriage as its exclusive model. Furthermore, no church can operate in contradiction to the state laws where, in our country for example, protection of sexual orientation can provide grounds for discrimination. Currently our laws allow for exemption but there are no guarantees when this is not contested in our courts.

The fourth part of the required supporting documentation is to “provide biblical and theological rationale for this change in teaching on the nature of marriage”. Christian Churches must have this rationale to be called Christians. The Church has done some work on this subject in the past but it did not lead to any acceptable conclusions. (See Rothsay Report, 2009) With the majority of the Anglican Church worldwide believing that opening the Church to leadership of people of same-sex attractions is not biblical, I would have to assume that this is a difficult task. Civil government in Canada has accepted same-sex marriage, but that does not make it acceptable for Christians. We cannot proceed with this motion without this rationale.

I ask your prayers for the members of the Marriage Commission and their assignment, that they will carry out God’s will for his church.

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