

It has taken me months, and several attempts to write to this submission. There is so much I can say on this topic, it's actually hard to know where to begin, what to include or what to edit out.

I have read most of the submissions posted here, all of them, reflecting how that person felt. What is obvious to me is that this is still a passionate topic as it was over 10 years ago. It was then when the Ottawa Diocese entered a dialogue process; to facilitate discussion on same-sex marriage. I, like most people have heard all the arguments concerning certain passages & the interpretations, used for & against same sex marriages. There is nothing more that I can add that hasn't been said before; except possibly to give you my experiences and feelings as one parent in the Church.

I am both a step-parent and a parent. I've been blessed with two amazing step-daughters with shared custody; and my own wonderful son. Regretfully, my two step-daughters for their reasons have now given up on attending church, so anything I say will be about raising my son in the church.

It means a lot for me to raise my son within the Anglican Church of Canada. I hope that through it, I can give him a strong base to carry his Christian belief and identity throughout his life. This was a gift given to me by my parents, I wish to ensure the same for him. Though he is now over 10 years old, certain irregularities within the church has already started to impact him and cause him to ask questions. I'm sure this is something any parent can relate to, and see it as a challenge trying to raise a child in the church today.

Before I continue with my perspective as a parent in the Church. We were asked that within our submissions we answer either all or any of six questions. Since I'm speaking as a parent in a family, which I believe created by God; from the perspective of my family that shapes my answer.

The way my family views marriage, is varied as there are people in my family. Though very conservative in its roots, my interpretations of marriage tends to combine its roots, with experiences gained not just with life, yet exposure to different Christian denominations. Raising my son in the church, I hope to raise him with the concept that each person builds their own personal intimate relationship with God. This relationship with God will be part of every aspect of his life, including his marriage to the person he chooses to give his lifelong love to.

I hope to teach him that when a couple celebrates their marriage, it is their love for each other that is already blessed by God. That a Christian marriage is a celebration of a family created. That as they stand there before God, it is in the witness of family, friends & church family that recognizes what God already sees as good. They make solemn vows of their love - before the community gathered before God. This becomes the living sacrament of their marriage. A new family is created, whether there are plans for children, or there are children already coming into that marriage. We do know that the church already marries people, who plan not to have children. Both my widowed Grandfathers remarried.

When it comes to the difference between a Civil & Christian marriage - he will be taught that they are legally the same. Based on what I just said - a civil married couple may have their love blessed by God, yet there was no witness of the vows by the community before God.

My son will learn through my own example that, a my lifelong relationship is blessed by God, and includes what is described in the marriage canon for "the purpose of marriage". It gives both people, mutual fellowship, support, and comfort; the procreation (however that maybe) and nurture of children.

It is the creation of a relationship in which "healthy" sexuality serves personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love for the couple.

Though he is still too young to understand either, the sacrament of marriage. The difference between marriage & the blessing of a relationship is big - just in the wording alone. Marriage is generally something legal that the Church does on behalf of the Province. A relationship is ultimately blessed by God, secondly by the community before God. The sacrament of a marriage exists as long as the earthly marriage exists and it is the respect of those vows made before God & community; that keeps its sacredness.

From my perspective of a parent, I hope that I have addressed the six questions. So far, I have spoken as a parent in general - I really haven't revealed who I am, so hopefully anyone reading this can relate to this as a parent.

Where my experience as a parent and that of my children start to differ from other families, is that same-sex families still are not recognized as equals. This has an impact on not just how the couple see their role in the church as well as their acceptance, but how the children see their role in the church and their acceptance.

Though this discussion on same sex marriage in the church focuses on the couples - there is an impact on the children as well. Same-sex couples have been raising children in the church for generations. Though many may leave, with those that remain it speaks to their firm belief. Some passages, which I believe may not have been read in their whole context - have been used against many Gay & Lesbian Christians. Though I find this is not necessarily the case where I attend church - there has been an odd occasion where I and my son have experienced some hurtful incidents. It still gives a few, the ability to feel entitled, justified, or whatever to make either hurtful or ostracising comments or actions. It is odd, that as a single person I never felt this, yet either my family situation changes things or I'm just more protective as I have a vulnerable child.

Interestingly, as I raise my family - my sexuality isn't the first thing that I think of or what defines me. I define myself as someone with a loving life partner, wonderful children and a desire to spend the rest of my life surrounded by the loving family I have. I strongly believe my family today, was brought together and blessed by God. I see myself as a typical Christian father, raising my son in the Church, trying to help him heal from past traumas and come to know a loving, inclusive God. A God who for whatever reason lovingly made him just as he did. Plus, a God who loved mankind so much, he manifested himself on earth through his own son. A son that would be the saviour for all of us. I think this would be in line with the average couple raising children in the church.

Often sitting in church, you forget that you're not like most other couples raising kids - this is the way it should be. Yet on occasion, something has been said, or done to remind you that though most people except you as a full member of the church - you can easily be hurt or momentarily ostracized by a comment or action. As an Adult, when someone uses scripture to attack who you that is one thing; as a parent I've become super vigilant to protect my son after a few hurtful incidents. Going to church should not be a stressful event worrying to protect my child, and you should never leave a church less spirit filled than when you went in. There is also nothing more upsetting than if you see your child disrespected for who their family is. I would not be truthful if I said there weren't a few incidents of such - in a church that is otherwise known as fairly inclusive.

I do not know if it seems that I have deviated from the original topic, yet my wish is to somehow show the tie between marriage & all families in the church. I truly believe the denial of the marriage sacrament impacts the family with the church. Though some would argue, I personally have felt that it creates two classes of families within the church, one family is allowed to have the parents married - one family where the parents is refused marriage. This creates conflict within the children and you as a parent must try to mitigate - if you want to continue to raise your children in the church. As I said, I strongly believe a lot of this could be corrected if the cannon law was changed to allow recognition of same-sex partners and the families that they create.

The continued discussion of this, could possibly causing more damage than good. I wonder someday when my son meets the special woman he wants to spend his life with, and build a family - will he disregard the idea of a church marriage as irrelevant. That being, as it was not important enough to be given to his two Dads. To carry that thought even further - as even more opposite sex couples decide not to get married and live common-law and the church seems OK with this, add to the fact that same-sex couples who want to get married are refused a church marriage - does this remove even more significance in a church marriage in youths eyes.

It is easy for many people to divide the world into two camps. The easy to blame secular world verses that world defined by their interpretations of what is in and out of the church. We were all created in the image of God, given inquisitive brains to learn, hearts in which God & the Holy Spirit to guide to interpret. If God is at work for change in the secular world, as we believe he is in the church - maybe our children are onto something. If there is a disconnect between the secular world and the church world - we should look at the hard facts that is given to us, yet a discerning heart that God gives us with.

As a parent there is just so much to discuss, yet this one submission cannot go in-depth. I hope I have been able to help give a bit of the perspective of one parent in the church.

Any decision made today, will impact the church tomorrow.

Respectfully submitted,

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