

Diocese of Ontario personal submissions regarding General Synod Canon 21 (The Marriage Canon).

This year (2018) marks my tenth year of ordination.

My training for ministry was in hospital chaplaincy. It was during these years I learned the supportive, open and broad-minded approach to ministry. This approach upholds the dignity and rights of others, supports them where they are at, and through the challenges and difficulties they are experiencing. It's an approach with roots I trace back to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures and their mandate to love.

At the bedside of those dying I've witnessed anger, disappointment, frustration, regret, sadness and relief. One woman stood to the left of her husband's bed as he lay dying; I on the right. Over his final breaths she told me about his abusiveness, how their children wanted nothing to do with him and was the reason they were not there. She disclosed his alcoholism, patterns of disrespect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. She said despite it all she couldn't leave him to die alone.

Throughout Scriptures we are called to love and be loved, to acceptance, forgiveness, to nurture and build community, to heal and be healed, to grow in unity, understanding, equality, justice, inclusion. It is hard and sometimes never achieved. Nonetheless, we are called.

I sit on the Hepatitis C Roundtable at Street Health. Street Health is part of Kingston Community Health Centre, an accredited health and social service agency that works in a multi-disciplinary team format. Street Health specifically works with people who have recently been released from incarceration, people who are vulnerably housed, people who engage in sex work and people who use substances. The members on the Roundtable either directly or indirectly care for and/or provide services to those with Hep C who are in need. Not everyone appreciates or values or approves of the services offered.

Scriptures were written in a particular context, at a particular time, with certain understandings and comprehensions of how the world, creation and humanity worked. For the majority, we no longer believe in much of what people believed thousands of years ago. At one time, a large part our societal understandings were based on Scripture. Today, while the roots may be predominantly Christian in Canada, the branches and fruits are no longer. The binary world many of us grew up in, like so much of what was 'normal' for us of a certain age, is disappearing. Now, there are inclusions of special needs, accommodations, genders/non-gendered, different sexual orientations, heteronormativity, that have far reaching manifestations. These are not wrong; they are a secular response to a shift in priorities.

To support Canon XXI roots Christians in the Scriptural mandate to love. We love despite those who've hurt us, whose lives and practices we may not approve of, like, appreciate or value. God calls us to love more fully and deeply. Loving, both giving and receiving, is one of the greatest challenges of all times. Being rooted in Scripture-based love, the love God and Jesus call us to live, is the foundation of our Christianity.

The Diocese of Ontario Norms [<http://ontario.anglican.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DIOCESE-OF-ONTARIO-NORMS.pdf>] establishes the standards by which our conversations are to be framed. These foundational terms of reference serve as a guide to engaged listening, respectful dialogue and courageous acceptance of the other. May it be so, for all.

Submitted by: Rev. Valerie Kelly; Interim Priest-in-Charge (Kingston North Anglican Ministries)