

Diocese of Ontario Consultation on the proposed change to Anglican Church of Canada Canon XXI on Marriage

Leeds Anglican Ministries submission, June 15, 2018

Following the presentation at St. Lawrence Church, Brockville on April 19, 2018, at which eight of the 12 Lay Delegates to Synod and both of the clergy were in attendance, members of the congregation were advised on how to access the Diocesan online information and, for those without internet, given access to hard copies of both 'This Holy Estate' and the handout prepared by Rev. Dr. Bill Morrow.

We held consultation sessions on April 28, April 29, May 6, May 20 and June 3 at the various points in our region at which the video of Bishop Michael's presentation at the April evening was viewed and members were invited to offer their comments. All Lay Delegates to Synod attended at least one of these sessions and a total of 66 members of the parishes attended one or more sessions

A great deal of the discussion focussed on questions and comments about the history and the process. In addition, many raised the matter of interpretation of Biblical passages relating to marriage and relationships, with a clear understanding that this is a matter upon which Anglicans are not in agreement.

No members spoke specifically in opposition to the proposed change to the Canon.

There were concerns expressed which related to the change to the Canon:

- Some difficulty accepting the use of the word 'Marriage', would prefer e.g. 'Blessing' or 'Commitment' (by 3 members)
- 'Not so sure' about same sex couples having children, whether it should be or shouldn't be
- This will impact our relationship with the worldwide Anglican Communion
- The longer it (the process) takes the more sure we will be
- Might the conscience clause be taken away by civil authorities?
- Are we compromising?
- Slow progress but needs to continue. For some it's hard to accept what they don't understand
- Understand that there won't be harmony on this issue

Members speaking in support of the proposed change offered many comments, most of which were general in nature, and also the following:

- Marriage is such a blessed institution that I cringe when I think of people that want to have the sacrament of marriage but are excluded from it. The more people that can receive it, the wider the love is spread and, in my following of Jesus, that's critical
- People who are born that way . . . should be entitled to be happy the same as anybody else

- If God is love and there is love in any relationship, then God must be there

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- We have evolved and we need to continue to evolve. These are people who love the same way we love our husband or wife. If they want to be married in the church why would we turn our backs on that?
- I was dead against changing ... but I have seen two gay couples and their relationships in excess of twenty years ... the church should not prevent that, so I think we should change
- I don't think it's fair to ostracize them ... the Anglican Church is an inclusive, not an exclusive one
- Everybody's entitled to be in a relationship where they can love each other and support each other ... and the church should support them in that
- How can you turn someone away because they're lesbian or homosexual ... the church is supposed to love everybody
- Would be happy to have members of our own family welcomed
- My grandson is so happy now that he has a partner
- How long have same sex couples lived not in the light. It's love, it's light and it seems to me that it's right
- If they are ostracized by the church, how can they love themselves?
- It's a little ridiculous that we even have to vote to accept people
- It's been a very slow process getting here
- We're not deciding for this change to keep up with society of today. It is a matter of our souls and spirits. We are not lowering the bar. Let's be raising the bar.
- We shouldn't be making decisions to turn people away
- Why should we deny somebody else something that we have the privilege of doing ... the right to marry in their faith?
- It helps if you know somebody
- Who am I to condemn two people of the same nature to not love and care for each other like heterosexual couples
- There is a range of what constitutes family (single parent, mother/father parents, same-sex parents)
- To continue to exclude or say they cannot be equally accepted as couples defies where we're at in human evolution
- Doesn't make sense not to marry same sex couple who have been faithful attenders and supporters of the church