

Archdeacon Wayne Varley
Anglican Diocese of Ontario
165 Ontario St.
Kingston, Ontario K7L 2Y6

October 5, 2018

Subject: Proposed changes to Marriage Canon 21:

The following commentary and suggestions are my own, but they are consistent with the position of many people I have talked to on this subject, including my wife.

It is my understanding our Parish will not be submitting any input at the Parish level and I have, therefore, felt moved to state my opinion as I believe the wrong approach has been taken to provide guidance on LGBT marriages.

I also note there is a general indifference on this subject within much of the Church because there has been neither a summary of the needs of the LGBT community with statistical data nor a general referendum on the matter of same sex marriage. The complexity of the issue and lack of information apparently causes most people to avoid involvement. The Holy Estate document only added to the confusion.

Problems with the existing proposal:

- 1) The existing proposal reduces traditional marriage between a man and woman to just one of many options

Although I support the formalizing of committed relationships within the LGBT community, I have difficulty accepting the approach being proposed by the Anglican Church of Canada, which is to modify the Marriage Canon (Canon 21) by eliminating any reference to a man and a woman. The Anglican Church of Canada appears to be moving to a culture beyond inclusiveness.

Canon 21 has been developed over the years for traditional marriage (between a man and woman) but is now being converted, in effect, to a Canon with emphasis on marriage between any possible variety of partners thereby reducing the importance of traditional marriage. Moreover, the current approach is too simplistic and fails to recognize a complex situation within the LGBT community. I am not convinced that this challenge has been adequately thought through. I suggest (see further on) that Canon 21 be divided into 2 parts: Canon 21A for traditional marriage between a man and woman and Canon 21B for LGBT marriages. This approach would likely lead to a better solution and would help avoid the level of division we are seeing in the Church on this subject.

- 2) Marriage will be just an adult game with children left out

Implicit in traditional marriage is the proper nurturing of children. With the proposed changes, marriage is now reduced to an adult game without adequate guidance with respect to children. I find this disturbing.

3) God's fundamental plan for humans overlooked

I believe the proposed revisions to Canon 21 are inconsistent with God's fundamental plan for humans where men and women are complementary to one another and where the orderly continuation of our species is maintained. For this reason alone, Canon 21 should remain intact for traditional marriage. If we believe in God and believe that the Bible was inspired by God, then we must believe in creation and, in the case of humans, the basic plan was man, woman, marriage and children.

Proposed solution:

Of course, God would expect variations in humans, since such variations - especially unexpected variations - are inherent in the genetic coding process and, therefore, God would expect us to accommodate and respect the LGBT community. Since the Bible provides little or no guidance on this subject, God would expect us to use our intelligence to find the right solution.

I believe that the appropriate solution would be to leave the present Canon 21 as is and rename it Canon 21A and to prepare a separate Canon (Canon 21B) for committed relationships within the LGBT community. The initial version of Canon 21B could be based on the proposed Canon 21 revisions.

In summary, a separate Canon for the LGBT community would be appropriate and more practical for the following reasons:

- The LGBT community would be able to take ownership of the new canon without affecting guidance for traditional marriage.

- A separate Canon would be less divisive within the church.

- The importance of traditional marriage and guidance with respect to such marriages and the proper rearing and nurturing of children would remain intact (i.e. with Canon 21 left as is and designated as Canon 21 A).

- A new canon would define relationships (which can be complex) within the LGBT community and provide guidance with respect to committed relationships. Guidance in cases where children may be involved could be included, as well. For example, all children to the greatest extent possible should have both a male and a female role model. I believe It is inadvisable that a child be raised by same sex parents, in which case he or she does not have the opportunity to grow up with a balanced view of sexuality. Such guidance in Canon 21B could offer suggestions to help ensure that in the exceptional circumstances where a child is involved in the LGBT community that he or she is raised properly with hope of a successful future.

Finally, I would say that if anyone does not believe traditional marriage is important – remember where most of us came from.

Sincerely,

Robert Whitehouse

Councillor and Treasurer, St. Paul's Anglican Church, Westport ON