

Gracious Restraint Bishops
Submission Response to the Commission on the Marriage Canon

Gracious Restraint is an association of bishops who are committed to observing the discipline of the Windsor moratoria¹ and to remaining within the Anglican Church of Canada and the Anglican Communion.

¹The three-fold moratoria include: 1. consecration of clergy to the office of Bishop who are living in a same gender relationship, 2. the authorization of public rites of blessing for same gender unions, and 3. interventions by Bishops into ecclesiastical provinces other than their own. These were affirmed at ACC14 in Jamaica 2009.

We want to assure the Commission on the Marriage Canon of our prayers as they continue their work, especially as they seek to collect and represent the broadest possible consultation.

We are concerned that the wording of C003 reflects and commits us to a weak and faulty ecclesiology.

Resolution C003 requires CoGS to prepare changes to Canon XXI that would allow for the marriage of same sex couples but stipulates that such provision must guarantee that “no member of the clergy, bishop, congregation or diocese should be constrained to participate in or authorize such marriages against the dictates of their conscience.”

While those last phrases of the first paragraph of C003 are intended to be generous, they contradict the unity and catholicity of the body of Christ. Our General Synod in 2010 affirmed a Sexuality Discernment Statement that included the recognition that “*When one acts there are implications for all.*” Our communion in Christ means that we share or participate in each other’s honours and suffering. As members in the body of Christ, and in particular of the Anglican Church of Canada, we participate in whatever each other does and this is made explicit when such actions are approved and authorized by General Synod. Romans 12.5, 1 Corinthians 12.26-27

We are concerned that the proposed change to the Marriage Canon would threaten the unity of the Anglican Church of Canada and of the Anglican Communion.

The proposed amendment and its conscience clause would undermine the unity of the Anglican Church of Canada in its doctrine, discipline and teaching and in such a way that the common recognition and reception of orders between dioceses as well as the ability of many to continue to assent to the Canons of General Synod will be seriously compromised.

Our relations with much of the Anglican Communion will be further strained and impaired and many of our ecumenical relations and dialogues will be compromised.

We hold that the plain teaching of Scripture is that marriage is intended to be the lifelong union of one man and one woman and that in all matters, including sexual morality, the law of God concludes all under sin that we may find forgiveness and new life in Christ.

The teaching of Genesis, and of chapters one, two and three in particular, is the bedrock of Christian anthropology and of any consideration of human sexuality. The purpose of sexual union in Genesis chapters one and two is procreation and to become one flesh, both of which require the intercourse of one man and one woman. This teaching, little practised in the stories of the Old Testament, though a theme of the prophets who saw a connection and reflection between monotheism and monogamy, is reinforced by our Lord's own reference to the created order of marriage and his recalling us to marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman as intended by the Creator. The marriage of same sex couples, though loving and faithful, does not have the authority of the Scriptures or of Christ. Genesis 1.26-28, Genesis 2.21-24, Mathew 19.3-6, Mark 10.2-9

Much neglected in our current debates over sexual morality, blessings and marriage is any honest account of our common sexual brokenness. The Scriptures teach about our fall from the original and ideal purposes of God and all our sexual expressions and experiences are marred by sin, by our dehumanizing, self-gratifying and self-destructive tendencies. Our Lord himself equates the lustful glance with adultery and he convicts all of sexual sin. Mathew 5.28 and John 8.7

We affirm that sexual distinction and marriage are given by God for:

- ***the procreation of children and that this is one of the chief ends of marriage in which sexual union finds its primary and inalienable purpose.*** Genesis 1.28, Genesis 9.1&7, Genesis 35.1
- ***that mutual and exclusive love, honour, service and self-giving between one man and one woman of which their sexual union is the sign and consummation.*** Ephesians 5.21-33, 1 Corinthians 7.3-5, 1 Corinthians 7.33-34
- ***the restraining and training of our sexual appetites.*** 1 Thessalonians 4.2-7, 1 Corinthians 7.1-9

We recognize that marriage is a universal institution, a part of the created order, though differing significantly in various cultural and religious contexts. Despite the broad variety of understandings of marriage in the world and history, it has always been based on the union of male and female.

We are convinced that confusing marriage and friendship results in devaluing both.

Marriage involves more than just the couple; there is a community good at stake in every marriage, in its solidity, permanence and sanctity. That which weakens the bonds of marriage also weakens the bonds of family and community resulting in often subtle, but nonetheless real damage to the health and stability of communities and individuals.

We are concerned that the adoption of a recreational view of sexual expression, whatever the sexes of the partners, violates the teaching of the Scriptures and the universal and consistent teaching of the Church.

We affirm that the redeemed end of humanity is to be found in our union with Christ and in Christ and that we are all called to a holiness which is expensive and generous, self-sacrificing and self-giving.

Marriage is a dominant image and symbol throughout the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. The reality of marriage is the mystery of Christ and his Church, which is to be reflected in the faithful, loving and self-giving lifelong union of one man and one woman. The ideal of Christian marriage is Christ and his Church. In that we all participate and for the consummation of that union we all long. Ephesians 5.31

We take seriously the pastoral needs of all people within our Dioceses and we are committed to minister to all, to the exclusion of none.

+William Anderson (Caledonia)
+Michael Hawkins (Saskatchewan)
+Fraser Lawton (Athabasca)

+Darren McCartney (Arctic)
+David Parsons (Arctic)
+Larry Robertson (Yukon)