

Chair Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Rev. Keith A. Rasey and I oppose House Bill 36."

As a minister/hospice chaplain with 30 years of experience, I already have had the right to refuse to marry anyone. I have exercised that right. I never feared being sued because, on judicial review, it has always been my understanding the courts would decide they had no legal jurisdiction in matters of religious conscience and church policy or doctrine.

This is a mislabeled canard of a bill. It is not a "pastor protection act," at all. It is an attempt to discriminate against human beings of different gender expression and orientation. Marriage confers, on couples, legal protections that are family and children friendly. It opens up communities of formal and informal support to legally married couples that make it easier for all to love responsibly in an enduring and nurturing way.

Making it more difficult for couples who are not binary in their sexuality, deprives them of the social opportunities to celebrate their love and commitment, to more deeply ground it in the abiding rituals of our culture and weakens the fabrics of all communities which rely on the power of love to sustain and enrich them.

I have a master's degree in "divinity" (really "practical theology" in more prosaic terms) from Yale. In 1977 I went out of my way there to carefully study this issue from an AngloCatholic perspective. Using what the United Methodist Church calls the "quadrilateral" of scripture, tradition, reason and experience, I came to the conclusion that Jesus had very little to say, as remembered in the Christian Bible, that was relevant on the matter of homosexuality, let alone intersexuality and asexuality. The passages in the Jewish sacred texts seemed focused more on homosexual rape and providing for the continuation of the Jewish peoples in a vastly different culture and time.

I came to understand, ultimately, that the people of God would still exist **without** the Bible. It is more of a crutch for those who are unable to imagine a living, growing, dynamic relationship with an extemporaneous spiritual presence and need the dead letter of a book with greatly conflicting advice to tell them what to do.

I also have come to realize that sexuality is not a binary choice. Human sexuality is as varied as the sexuality of all the other sentient beings with which we share creation.

Not all animals have males as head of the family. Neither do all human societies. Some animals are both male and female or can change their gender due to changing environments.

Human happiness will not be found by trying to enforce an outdated, binary code of gender in a legal code. Anytime the law has to be used to buttress some moral code that time has passed by, that moral code has already lost its salience and power. It's like trying to stop a flowing stream by clutching some of its water in your hands.

Human happiness is better encouraged by widening the understanding of what is a genuinely full expression of what it means to be human in our most intimate relationships. Liberating people to

be who they are becoming rather than restricting them to a straitjacket of conformity that is not consistent with science, evolving standards and more contemporary understandings, is the way toward human fulfillment and the ultimate triumph of love.

Sincerely,

Rev. Keith A. Rasey, M.Div., LNHA
CEO
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