

September 2015

Dear Friend,

Back-to-school time is a busy time of transition for many. And for some who are in their last years of secondary school, they are already planning which universities they will be applying to and what they will be studying.



In addition to considering a university's cost, reputation and academic quality, many students may also be giving due consideration to the type of university experience they want. What is the campus culture like? What are the students like? "Will I fit in?"

When parents decide to send their kids to a faith-based school, they expect the school to operate in ways that are true to their religious ideals and that provide a supportive environment where their children will not be harassed for expressing faith-based points of view. The school becomes a partner in helping the students further develop an intimate understanding of and connection to their faith as they grow towards spiritual maturity.

Trinity Western University (TWU) is a private Christian school in B.C. and an affiliate of the EFC. It established a Community Covenant out of *love for God* and in *submission to His word* as the final authority in faith and life, believing that it will foster a healthy academic, spiritual, and communal life. As such, it requires its students to adhere to a holistic set of expectations about attitudes and behaviours that includes, for example, abstaining from sexual intimacy outside the bounds of marriage between a man and a woman.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)*

Does TWU's Christian ethos discourage those who don't want the same university experience from applying? Yes. Would those who don't hold the same biblical ideals find it difficult to abide by the school's Covenant? Yes. Admittedly, TWU is not for everyone.

Does that make the school discriminatory? Only in the same sense that a gym would be considered discriminatory because the training philosophy of its members or the restrictive rules about equipment usage deters some applicants from applying for membership. In neither case are human rights laws being violated. That is, there is no discrimination based on religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, etc. People who choose to enroll at a particular university or gym (out of the myriad of choices that exist) do so voluntarily and out of a willingness to abide by that community's standards of personal conduct.

*over please...*

***"What is at stake is the steady erosion of our religious freedoms."***

So on what grounds are three provincial law societies in Canada (in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia) refusing to accredit TWU's proposed law school? On the grounds that its requirement for students and staff to abstain from "*sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman*" constitutes institutional discrimination. They argue that it places restrictions on the LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community and deprives them of the chance to have equal access to educational opportunities at TWU. As such, they demand that TWU redefine its definition of marriage and its expectations around sexual intimacy in order for the law school to be approved.

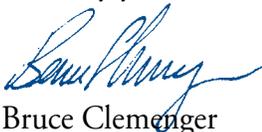
But TWU has never excluded students based on sexual orientation or religious beliefs. Not only are LGBT+ students members of the University community, but so are people from many different faiths. However, by signing the Community Covenant, members agree to live in compliance with traditional understandings of biblical principles, which includes respecting the traditional definition of marriage.

Those who believe that it is no big deal for TWU to change its Covenant to get the proposed law school accredited are not seeing the big picture. What is at stake is the steady erosion of our religious freedoms as increasingly we are being told that religion has no place in our educational system and in the public sphere because our worldviews are different from those of the majority.

Because the stakes are so high, the EFC has been intervening in each provincial court case to defend our Constitutional right to freedom of religion. In January 2015, the Supreme Court of N.S. decided in favour of TWU, but in July, the Ontario Divisional Court decided in favour of the Law Society of Upper Canada. Both decisions are currently being appealed. And just last month, the B.C. Supreme Court reviewed the Law Society of B.C.'s decision not to approve the TWU School of Law – a decision that led B.C.'s Advanced Education Minister to revoke his approval for TWU's proposed law school. Unless the Ministry reinstates its approval, TWU *cannot enroll any students in the program at all*. As such, your prayers for a favourable outcome in this case are coveted at this time.

It is very likely that all three cases will make its way through the provincial court systems to land before the Supreme Court of Canada within the next two years. Your sustained financial support is critical to ensure that the EFC can continue to be present at every step to defend our Constitutional right to freedom of religion. Your gifts today may impact the future of Christian education in Canada. Will you consider becoming an **EFC Partner in Faith** by signing up to make automatic monthly pre-authorized gifts from your chequing account or credit card? Together, we can work to defend our religious freedoms to strengthen the Church in Canada.

Sincerely yours,



Bruce Clemenger  
President

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