

Gretta Vosper vs. the United Church

Tues., Sept. 20, 2016

Re: I can't believe in an atheist minister, Sept. 19

I can't believe in an atheist minister, Sept. 19

I read with great interest both the article by Rosie DiManno and the Letters to the Editor concerning United Church Minister Gretta Vosper. As an Anglican Priest I am keenly aware of the shifts in people's understanding of spirituality and their struggle to find a means to address the spiritual questions of life. I do so within the context of a tradition that stands on faith, reason, and tradition. The combination of these three provides balance and context to the Theistic concept of a God we as Christians believe in. Into this camp there are polarities about how to live out this faith — but the general belief in God, Jesus and a Spirit abide.

Vosper has allowed reason and her understanding of the evolution of faith beyond the need for a "God" construct to disconnect her from the tradition and faith of the United Church — which holds her minister credentials. This in and of itself is not wrong and a journey many make in the course of their life. While she has to be true to her personal journey and understanding of spirituality, it is unfortunate that she has placed her congregation into battle with the denomination on her behalf. She is free to gather others around herself and set a spiritual course based on her understanding. It is unrealistic for her to anticipate that the United Church, broad as its tent may be, to credential her atheistic spirituality devoid of Christian sacraments and beliefs.

The Reverend Donald Shields, Whitby, Ont.

There is no shortage of opinions regarding the United Church of Canada possibly removing Reverend Vosper from her position at West Hill United. One cannot but be less than amused when non-religious folk wade in arguing that it is inappropriate for an atheist to be a minister in a Christian church. As a committed atheist I know that it is none of my darn business what standards of believe are required for one to be a minister/priest/rabbi/imam, etc. in a religious community. I do find it passing strange however when it is argued that spirituality is the sphere of religion and that an atheist cannot by definition be spiritual. I would not dare presume to define spirituality but surely a life affirming humanitarian approach to the mysteries of life is by its very essence spiritual.

Simon Rosenblum, Toronto.

