



Diocese of the Rocky Mountains Customary for Holy Matrimony

MARRIAGE

The opening statement of the 1662 *Solemnization of Matrimony* says that God instituted marriage before our rebellion in Genesis 3 and that it signifies the mystical union between Christ and His Church. What we participate in when we officiate at a wedding is far greater than what our culture assumes. Therefore, it is not to be entered into *unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained*. The purposes the 1662 gives are the procreation of children – that they are brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, that we would be chaste and our desires would be hallowed, and *mutual society* (companionship), *help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity*.

The preface to the ACNA liturgy of Holy Matrimony says, *“Marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, binding both to self-giving love and exclusive fidelity. The rite of Holy Matrimony is a worship service of the Church, in which the couple exchanges vows to uphold this covenant. They do this before God and in the presence of witnesses, who pray that God will bless their life together.*

“The covenantal union of man and woman in marriage signifies the communion between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the Church, his holy bride (Ephesians 5:32). While all do not marry, Holy Matrimony symbolizes the union all Christians share with their Lord.”

The ACNA Catechism (*To Be a Christian*) states, *“In Christian marriage God establishes and blesses the covenant between husband and wife, and joins them to live together in the communion of love, faithfulness and peace within the fellowship of Christ and his Church. God enables all married people to grow in love, wisdom and godliness through a common life patterned on the sacrificial love of Christ.”* (Q. 130)

Historically, marriage has not been seen as an individualistic affair but involves the coming together of families with an expectation of a continuance of the generations and future inheritance. The modern West has lost much of this understanding, but it remains the norm in much of the Global South. Because the community of faith is integral to a healthy marriage, clergy are to officiate at weddings of members of their church. Exceptions are made for family and close friends (though it would be advisable for those couples to be involved in a Church). Those who come in “off the street” are to be invited into the Church family as part of their



preparation. It is also the responsibility of the clergy to understand local law and to consult with the Bishop and chancellor should they believe themselves compelled by law to act in a manner contrary to the teaching or canons of this Church.

There is a tension between the outward-looking opportunities of marriage and the need for discipleship. Many couples meet the Lord and enter into the life of the church beginning with marriage and child rearing. Many potential converts still wish to be married in church. At the same time, we do not want to dilute the doctrine of marriage (and divorce) by accepting far too casually couples who want little more than a venue. The Provincial Canons expect that both candidates are baptized (unless excepted by the bishop). Clergy are expected to inquire further of the couple's faith and manner of life. This process provides an opportunity for personal evangelism of nominal Christians and unbelievers. These candidates for marriage should be willing to affirm the biblical and Trinitarian language of the rite.

Great care should be taken to prepare all candidates for Holy Matrimony. Clergy are responsible to oversee the process of premarital instruction; however, they may make use of various available programs and may call on lay "marriage mentors" to assist them. Premarital counseling requires a minimum of 5 sessions; topics may include building a spiritual life together, communication, conflict, intimacy, and finances. The planning of the service is an additional meeting.

Clergy are expected to uphold the Christian value of chastity. Couples who are already sexually active need to commit to refrain until they are married. The ability to control our desires contributes to the ability to remain chaste in marriage.

Although it is more the cultural norm, couples should not live together before they are married. If they are living together because of financial burden, then the church should seek to provide a place to stay for one member of the couple at the house of a parishioner during the engagement. Couples that are determined to continue living together would need to have a civil marriage and then a Blessing of the Marriage once premarital counseling is finished.

The 1662 Solemnization of Holy Matrimony, the ACNA Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage or the 1979 BCP Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage are normative for the wedding liturgy. Departures from or additions to this liturgy are discouraged. Couples are not allowed to write their own vows – as they are often weaker than the vows in the liturgy.

While in some states anyone can serve as an officiant, Holy Matrimony is a public covenant making ceremony between God and a man and a woman (Appendix B) in the context of the community. Therefore, it is appropriate for a Presbyterian to preside (Deacons may, with the Bishop's permission, officiate at a wedding if there is not a Presbyterian available to officiate. Since Deacons may not pronounce the blessing of the marriage, it is appropriate that a Presbyterian gives the blessing at a later time).

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

The ACNA liturgy includes the ancient custom of announcing the wedding publicly at least three times, also known as the “Banns of Marriage,” bidding the prayers and support of the community. This speaks to the great necessity for the whole body of Christ to support those joined in Holy Matrimony and their witness in Church and in society.

The use of the Banns can be incorporated creatively into the engagement, e.g., with a first announcement at the beginning of instruction, a second in conjunction with the signing of the Declaration of Intention, and a third on the Sunday before the wedding. While the Banns may be particularly useful in congregations where a couple is well known, clergy should take responsibility to see that non-resident couples are commended to a local church.

If the Banns are published, it shall be in the following form:

“I publish the Banns of Marriage between *N.N.*, and *N.N.*, and I bid your prayers on their behalf. If any of you know cause, or just impediment, why these two persons should not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, you are to declare it. This is the first [second or third] time of asking.”

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

If using the ACNA liturgy for Holy Matrimony, the couple is expected to sign and affirm the Declaration of Intention prior to the marriage, signaling their commitment to Christian marriage. The clergy should, at a bare minimum, ensure that these persons affirm God’s design of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage. The text of the Declaration of Intention, to be signed and dated by both parties prior to the marriage, reads as follows:

“We, *N.N.* and *N.N.*, desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is established by God for the procreation of children, and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord; for mutual joy, and for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; to maintain purity, so that husbands and wives, with all the household of God, might serve as holy and undefiled members of the Body of Christ; and for the upbuilding of Christ’s kingdom in family, church, and society, to the praise of his holy Name. We do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God’s help thereto.”

It may also be appropriate to conduct the signing of the Declaration of Intention during a public liturgy.

REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE (*Appendix A deals with divorce*)

Our pastoral concern should be that the issues that ended the marriage(s) have been addressed and that sufficient time has passed to grieve the previous marriage(s) and address issues from



the previous marriages. The *minimum* appropriate time period to even begin premarital counseling is one year from the date of the divorce.

You will need to meet with the couple a minimum of 4 times (in no less than 45 days) in order to submit a request to the bishop for remarriage (A date for the proposed marriage should not be set until permission has been obtained). It needs to be clear that you are not seeking to assign blame for a previous divorce, but that you need to assess the self-awareness. In these meetings you will assess:

- What role, if any, the new partner had in the breakup of the previous marriage.
- Have they approached any other minister about this proposed marriage before coming to you? If yes, give details.
- In your opinion, is (are) the previous marriage(s) psychologically and practically ended?
- Are you satisfied that obligations to the former spouse and/or children have been or are being fulfilled responsibly?
- What do you think the divorced applicant(s) has (have) learned from the previous marriage(s) which will help the proposed marriage succeed?
- What other factors make you think the proposed marriage will be successful?
- What problems do you see ahead?
- Do you think the applicants are dealing soundly with the realities and potential problems?
- Does the couple demonstrate that they bring strength and insight into this new relationship, and have a strong spiritual understanding of the sanctity of marriage?

Following these meetings, the Rector will write the Bishop a one-page letter indicating why he supports or does not support the candidate's second marriage.

Upon receiving the report, the Bishop may request the following: Written statements from the marriage party indicating why they are seeking a second marriage. Additionally, the Bishop can assign more counseling and study to the parties involved. Finally, the Bishop may request a face-to-face meeting prior to granting his approval or denying the request for marriage.

If the bishop approves of the marriage, the Rector should continue, then, with premarital counseling (or assure that there is adequate premarital counseling).



APPENDIX A

DIVORCE

THE NEED FOR A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING

There are a number of texts that deal with divorce in scripture. That being the case, our understanding of the Biblical perspective on divorce needs to be drawn from all of the pertinent scriptures, in their context, and rightly exegeted. Following the Reformation understanding that scripture interprets scripture, as well as the understanding that it is wrong to interpret one scripture in a way that is not consistent with other scriptures (not “repugnant” to other scriptures), this is not as simple a task as quoting one verse in the Bible to give the “Biblical” understanding on divorce.

There is a need to have a consistent Biblical view because the church has, like the culture, become very permissive towards divorce. All too often the church has taken on the culture’s view that marriage is based simply on feelings of romantic love (and once those feelings leave, the marriage dissipates) or the church has taken the therapeutic view where marriage is about self fulfillment (and the spouse “getting in the way” of self fulfillment or happiness is grounds for divorce). We need to recapture what the Bible teaches.

A BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

First we need to understand something about the Biblical definition of marriage. One important text is Genesis 2:24, *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”* There is an order here – of leaving father and mother and being united to his wife. This was radical in the Ancient Near East culture – because it set the marriage relationship as a higher loyalty than one’s own parents. The two are united as “one flesh” which indicates at least a physical, emotional and social unity. There is also a spiritual unity since the woman was made of the corresponding nature as Adam’s “helper” (*Biblically, to help is not to assist or be subordinate to, it means to do for someone what they are incapable of doing – which is why God is also our helper*). It is also important to note that it is a singular man and a singular woman – ruling out at least polygamy.

The language of Genesis 2:23-24 is considered covenant language by many, *“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”* Proverbs 2:16-17 speaks of marriage as a covenant made before God, *“It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.”* A covenant is not just a personal matter, but also a public matter affecting all of society.

There are many things that could be found in scripture that supply the terms of the marriage covenant. Among the many verses, here are a few. Genesis 2:24 gives us monogamy, the priority of the relationship above other family relationships, and the idea of being a help to one another (from previous verses). Ephesians 5 gives us the picture of the husband loving his



wife and the wife submitting to her husband and how this is a Gospel sign of the relationship between Christ and His Church. 1 Corinthians 7 tells us that the couples' bodies belong to each other and that they should not withhold sexual intimacy from one another. There are many more verses – such as the husband sacrificing and laying down his life for his wife as well as the understanding that the Husband needs to provide for his wife – but this is not the primary topic being addressed.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is one of the clearer passages in the Old Testament about divorce. First it is important to notice the context of these verses: the primary concern is to forbid a man from marrying his former spouse if there is an intervening marriage¹. Divorce was obviously permitted in the Mosaic Law since this passage forbids remarrying a former wife. The process would be that the man would write her a certificate of divorce and give it to her and sends her out of the house – and she would need to leave the house (the language gives some sense of her then agreeing or accepting this decree).

The phrase that caused much speculation by the Rabbis is, *“If she then finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her.”* The indecency (or something shameful) cannot be adultery as adultery was a capital crime – the punishment was death. It is a general term, whose root means “exposed.” Because of the general nature of the word, different schools of thought from different Rabbis rose about what this word meant – some very lax in their interpretation (even burning dinner or finding somebody you liked better) and some very strict².

Leviticus 22:13 assumes divorce is present in God's covenant community and for reasons other than adultery (which is punishable by death), *“But if a priest's daughter becomes a widow or is divorced, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat any of it.”* Numbers 30:9 also assumes this to be true, *“Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.”*

Deuteronomy 22 gives a few cases where a man may not divorce his wife – if he is not pleased with her and lies about her sexual purity before their marriage or if a man (unmarried) violated the honor of a unbetrothed virgin, they were to marry and he couldn't divorce her. At least part of this would be because the man was proven to not be trustworthy – and it would also mitigate against “easy divorce.”

While divorce is assumed and permitted in the Mosaic Covenant, it is obvious that this is not God's intent, original design or best. In Malachi 2:16 the Lord says, *“I hate divorce.”* The joining together of husband and wife as one flesh is intended to be life-long union. The Old

-
1. The reason for this is not given. Some think it is to protect a wife from a capricious husband, others think it is to protect against casual divorce, and others think it has to do with sexual purity and God's holiness (Lev 21:7 forbids a priest to marry a woman who is divorced because of the “holiness of God”). The most compelling argument was to forbid the pagan practice of “loaning” your wife to somebody else (to pay a debt or to incur favor, etc.). Thus the protection of the wife from cruelty and abuse seems to be what is described here.
 2. Also we see that remarriage was allowed – the text presupposes remarriage

Testament recognizes that the marriage covenant can sometimes be broken, although divorce is not approved of, but permitted in rare circumstances. The consistent message of the Old Testament seeks to preserve the divine ideal for marriage but recognizes and makes concession for the fact that we live in a fallen and sinful world.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the Gospels we have Jesus speaking about divorce in response to a question the Pharisees ask to test or trap Jesus³ – they ask if it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife (the Matthew passage adds “for any and every reason”). Since divorce was accepted in Judaism, the “test” was what constituted legitimate grounds for divorce. Jesus grants that the Mosaic law permitted divorce, but it was not God’s original design or intent (Jesus’ appeal to Genesis) – divorce was permitted because of “*hardness of heart*” – sin. The permission for divorce is a concession because of sin. This concession was intended to limit the bad effects of sin – and it was a divine concession, given by God.

Jesus states that the joining of man in woman in marriage as one flesh, including the sexual union, creates an indissoluble bond. Jesus, in reaching back to Genesis, doesn’t take away the Mosaic Law – it is left in place – but it is depicted as a concession to human sinfulness. In so doing, Jesus is calling those who are in the Kingdom of God to a higher ground – He is calling them to live out what God’s original intent for marriage is, not to live out the concession that is given because of sinfulness. In this understanding, divorce – even if it is permissible – is antithetical to God’s design for husband and wife. Jesus emphatically adds, in Mark 10:9, “*Therefore what God has joined (yoked) together, let man not separate.*” Even though there is a divine concession permitting divorce because of our sinfulness, Jesus calls His disciples to the standard of God’s original intent.

Later, in the Mark passage, Jesus gives further instruction to the disciples: Mark 10:11-12, “*Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.*” What needs to be clear is the cultural context of these verses: people divorced *in order to marry somebody else*. Jesus tells His disciples that those who divorce in order to marry another are committing adultery when they remarry.

In the Matthew 19 parallel of Mark 10, Jesus gives an exception to his statement about divorce found in Mark – there are legitimate grounds for divorce: *porneia*. (Matthew 19:9) This word is much more general than “adultery” but it does have something to do with sexual misconduct: it could be adultery, incest, premarital unchastity, bestiality, etc. Of importance: Jesus allows divorce on these grounds – it is not demanded or even encouraged.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also addresses divorce. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is exposing how some perverted the Law (“*It has been said,*”) and is calling people to a higher standard. In Matthew 5:31 Jesus says, “*It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’*” This is a perversion of Deuteronomy 24 – giving the impression that divorce was easily accomplished – just give a certificate of

3. Mark 10:1-2, Matthew 19:3-12.

divorce. Jesus gives one exception – *porneia*. The wording of Matthew, however, is different – the Greek is a very literal rendering of the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 24:1. The Matthew readings give a legitimate ground for divorce – *porneia* – which would make remarriage an option without committing adultery.

Divorce is addressed in Luke only in 16:18, “*Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*” Of interest is that neither Mark nor Luke give an exception to divorce, which Matthew does twice.

In the New Testament (1 Corinthians 7:10-16), after the Apostle Paul states that people should not divorce, he adds another exception – divorce is permitted if an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse. This is in conflict with the view that God only allows divorce in the case of adultery because of Jesus’ statements in Matthew⁴. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:11, does not characterize remarriage as adultery, but he does discourage divorce. He does, however, assume that divorce will happen in the Christian community – if a woman divorces her husband, she must remain unmarried or reconcile with her husband⁵.

Paul articulates the same vision Jesus does about divorce: it shouldn’t happen. However, he assumes that it will – that people will not live up to the standard the Bible gives. What is interesting is that Paul does not say that the woman must be kicked out of the church if she divorces her husband. Paul also gives the impression that a Christian who is deserted by an unbelieving spouse may remarry (he/she is not bound).

In two of the Gospels, Jesus gives no exception to the norm that believers should never divorce. In Matthew, Jesus gives *porneia* as an exception – what seems at first glance to be the only exception. However, in 1 Corinthians we have Paul giving another exception. Was Paul speaking against and contradicting the truth Jesus laid down? How do we reconcile Jesus and Paul? We either have to say that Paul is contradicting Jesus (which is certainly not right) or that he understood Jesus’ teaching in such a way that it permitted his additional exception of an unbelieving spouse deserting a believing spouse – thus unlawful sexual behavior, or adultery, is not the only grounds for divorce.

The answer lies in what was stated at the beginning – marriage is a covenant, and covenants can be broken – though not easily⁶. The marriage covenant is not an ordinary human contract

4. The first thing to clear up in this passage is that Paul is giving a contrast between two divine and authoritative forms of teaching: apostolic and from the Lord (Paul later gives his commands authority even above the prophets and states that his commands are the Lord’s commands – 1 Corinthians 14:7). He is *not* saying that his teaching is not binding or somehow it is not authoritative, he is just pointing out that what he is saying is from the Lord through Paul, and not from something Jesus said.

5. Both Greek words used in 1 Corinthians 7:11 refer to divorce – Paul uses a passive form for the woman and an active form for the man. Some versions of the Bible erroneously translate the first verb as “separate” when it speaks about the wife divorcing her husband: not only does the word not mean separate, there was no Greek equivalent to our modern separation.

6. The problem is that we have adopted an understanding that the marriage covenant can be easily broken, and thus have become too permissive with divorce: accepting “unhappiness” or “falling out of love” as a breaking

that is easy to break. The Jews in Jesus' time thought of marriage as something that could easily be broken. Marriage is used as a picture of God's relationship with His people – and it took centuries of unfaithfulness before the Lord declared His covenant with Israel was broken. The marriage covenant can only be broken by extraordinary circumstances (I would argue that the Deuteronomy text points to extraordinary circumstances). And even in the case of extraordinary circumstances (such as *porneia* or an unbelieving spouse leaving) divorce is not encouraged but only permitted as a *last resort* since covenant breaking is a serious and sinful act (and possibly divorce in these cases is seen as the lesser of two evils or sins).

This still leaves the question of the “legitimate” grounds for divorce. Deuteronomy seems to point to cruelty (*See note 2*), the Gospel of Matthew points to unlawful sexual behavior while Paul points to some cases of desertion⁷. All of these would fall into “hardness of heart” which is more than just sin, but persistence in sin: a refusal or inability to reconcile and seek restoration of a broken covenant. “I married the wrong person,” or, “I no longer love my spouse,” or, “We would both be happier apart,” are not grounds for divorce – because these things do not break the marriage covenant: they are just the signs of the self absorption which permeates our culture.

HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

It is also helpful to see how the church through the ages has seen this issue.

In the early church, there is very little reference to divorce – although, as we see in 1 Corinthians 7, it is recognized as being present. Augustine was the first to develop the idea of marriage as a sacrament. He also held that marriage was indissoluble in a moral sense: marriage *should not* be dissolved. In medieval times, the church developed the view that marriage was indissoluble in an absolute sense: it *could not* be dissolved (but they did develop a fairly complex set of regulations where a marriage could be annulled – declared never to have been a marriage, even if it were consummated).

During the reformation, in an effort to return to a biblical understanding, the reformers rejected the idea of marriage as a sacrament and also rejected the idea that marriage was absolutely indissoluble – they also rejected annulments. Their belief was that the Bible did allow divorce with the right to remarriage in some circumstances: *it is not God's plan, but it is a concession to the sinfulness of the human heart*. Taking the Old Testament scriptures, the Gospel records, and with Paul's writings, some reformers gave the grounds for divorce as adultery, malicious desertion, attempts against the partner's life and cruelty.

PASTORAL APPLICATION

What we can say is that permanent, monogamous marriage is the norm intended by God.

of the covenant. As stated earlier, this is more reflective of our therapeutic world-view than of the Biblical understanding.

7. Given 1 Corinthians 7, we cannot say that adultery or sexual immorality is the only grounds for divorce. Some would say that the seriousness of sexual immorality and desertion should operate as the paradigms of the kind of extreme actions which is necessary to break the marriage covenant, though not a complete list – that Jesus and Paul are both explicating something of the truth of Deuteronomy 24 – and that the Lord does grant a divine concession for divorce, though it should be very rare.

Divorce is nowhere encouraged in scripture. Even when there are reasons for divorce, it is seen as a tragic moving away from the norm God intends from the beginning. Jesus does say that divorce is a divine concession because of hardness of heart, but He calls His disciples to a higher standard – one that includes the call to love unconditionally and to even suffer in that call to love.

Even though the Bible does not clearly state that adultery (or sexual immorality) is the *only* legitimate grounds for divorce, in the face of the overwhelming numbers of divorces in our culture today, many churches have adopted that standpoint. The reason is simple: if we understand that divorce is not the norm and should be rare and only allowed when the marriage covenant has been broken and there is no hope for restoring it – then every person who is seeking divorce will claim to be that rare case (this was probably the case in Jesus’ day). However, we can’t let the cultural realities change what scripture says either by becoming more lax or stricter.

It is clear that God recognizes that divorce will occur. Even when divorce is allowed, it is still a sin – it is still a transgression against the Lord’s holy and pure intent for the marriage covenant⁸. In the church, our job is to strive for reconciliation and restoration in marriages: with an understanding that God hates divorce – and an understanding that some marriage covenants, once broken, will not be restored because of “hardness of heart.” Divorce, in some *rare and extreme* circumstances, may be allowed as the lesser evil (though it always stands under divine judgment). It is also clear that divorced people are understood to be in the church: they are not rejected or ostracized.

8. Divorce is a sin in that it is a departure from God’s purpose and norm. An analogy: cutting off a leg is not good; if the leg has cancer or gangrene and the option is to keep the leg and die or amputate the leg and live, then it is the lesser of two evils to cut off the leg – but this doesn’t negate the original statement that cutting off a leg is not good. This does *not* mean that those who divorce are to be rejected from the church – there are no grounds for that in scripture, in fact it assumes that there will be divorced people in the congregation. God does not love somebody who is divorced any less and divorce is not the unforgivable sin.



APPENDIX B

Statement from Global South Primates and GAFCON Primates concerning same-sex unions

6th October 2016

1. We acknowledge that God is the Creator of the whole cosmos and of humankind. Male and female, God created them in his own image and likeness to know him, worship him and share in his glory and love.
2. We affirm the dignity and value of every human being, as each bears the image of our gracious God. We recognise that humankind's rebellion against God has tainted that image, but not eradicated it. Yet every person is precious to God.
3. God's message of hope is therefore addressed to every man, woman and child around the globe, that they might be redeemed, restored as image bearers of God through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and inherit eternal life.
4. As we proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to a broken and wounded world, we acknowledge our own failures and weaknesses in the light of God's word, the Bible. As God's love was declared to us, before we loved God, so we declare God's love to those who neither know him nor love him. Yet our love for God is both to believe and obey, and so our message is to call people to repentance and love for God, that they might be forgiven and live their lives in accordance with God's pattern for humankind as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. We recognise that the brokenness of our world produces many aspects of human behaviour which are contrary to God's good design. These include slander, greed, malice, hatred, jealousy, dishonesty, selfishness, envy and murder, as well as fornication, adultery and same-sex unions. In addressing the issue of same-sex relationships, we are not minimizing the sinfulness of other forms of behaviour that are contrary to God's character and pattern for humankind. Rather, we are addressing an issue that continues to be contentious in both the Church and society and that strikes at the very heart of biblical authority.
6. We affirm that the clear teaching of Jesus, and the Bible as a whole, is that marriage is an estate for all people, not just for believers. It is a holy institution, created by God for a man and a woman to live in a covenantal relationship of exclusive and mutual love for each other until they are parted by death. God designed marriage for the well-being of society, for sexual intimacy between a husband and a wife, and for procreation and the nurturing of children (Genesis 2:18-25).
7. We contend that sexual intercourse between two persons of the same sex is contrary to God's design, is offensive to him and reflects a disordering of God's purposes for complementarity in sexual relations. Like all other morally wrong behaviour, same-sex unions alienate us from God and are liable to incur God's judgment. We hold these



convictions based on the clear teaching of Scripture. We hold them not in order to demean or victimise those who experience same-sex attractions, but in order to guard the sound doctrine of our faith, which also informs our pastoral approach for helping those who struggle with same-sex impulses, attractions and temptations.

8. In this respect, the Church cannot condone same-sex unions as a form of behaviour acceptable to God. To do so would be tampering with the foundation of our faith once for all laid down by the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2: 20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Jude 3).
9. Any pastoral provision by a church for a same-sex couple (such as a liturgy or a service to bless their sexual union) that obviates the need for repentance and a commitment to pursue a change of conduct enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit, would contravene the orthodox and historic teaching of the Anglican Communion on marriage and sexuality. Such pastoral provisions, while superficially attractive in giving a more humane and socially acceptable face to the church, actually hide the contravention of doctrine involved. We must be faithful in guarding the good deposit of the gospel, in all its gracious gifts with all its covenantal obligations as well, not for the mere sake of orthodoxy but out of genuine love for God and our fellow human beings.
10. Our faithfulness to God and knowledge of his love empowers us to offer sensitive and compassionate ministry to those who are sexually broken in the area of same-sex attractions and unions. Our pastoral approach is to accept people for who they are, just as God accepted us for who we were. We oppose the vilification or demeaning of those who do not follow God's ways. We affirm that every person is loved by God, so we too must love as God loves. Our role is to restore them to God's divine patterns by inviting them to receive the transforming love of Christ that gives them the power to repent and walk in newness of life. We rely on the Holy Spirit's power to reveal to them the measureless goodness of God and the greatness of God in setting the captive free as a new creation.
11. We recognise that discipleship involves growth and while we long for all new believers to come to maturity in Christ, we know that this is a process. For those who are same-sex attracted, the path of discipleship and living in conformity with God's Word can be difficult. We commit ourselves afresh to care pastorally for them as members of Christ's body, building them up in the Word and in the Spirit, and encouraging them to walk by faith in the paths of repentance and obedience that lead to fullness of life (John 10: 9-10).