

Resolution on Marriage

Passed by
the First English Presbytery of the International Presbyterian Church
on 8th June, 2013

In the light of the plans of the UK and Scottish Governments, to redefine marriage to allow same-sex couples to ‘marry’, which are (humanly speaking) likely to become law in the near future, this presbytery wishes to state that it considers the following to be unchangeable truths revealed in Scripture and binding on both the understanding and the actions of Christians.

1. Marriage being an institution created by God as intrinsic to human nature, and clearly revealed to be so both by that nature and in the revealed law of God in scripture, no government has the authority to redefine the nature of marriage. Laws passed by governments may either recognise or defy the created order and the commands of God, but they have no power to change either.
2. Marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman which is expressed in ongoing sexual union, which provides the family unit in which the children of that union are to be brought up, and which requires sexual faithfulness. As a universal human institution, God’s law of marriage also requires sexual abstinence outside of marriage. The redefinition of marriage in law would not change this. Rather, it would simply leave the law of the United Kingdom affirming a falsehood.
3. Christians see obedience to the law of the land as a duty to God; it is a Christian characteristic to make a very high priority of submission to the law. However because our primary duty is to God himself we cannot submit to laws which are in direct defiance of the laws of God revealed in scripture.
4. Sexual relationships other than the conjugal union of a husband and wife are in no way equivalent to that union, but are sinful. This means they are both destructive of human relationships and society and, moreover, offensive to God. This is true of premarital sex, adultery, and homosexual practice in all its forms. The veneration of sexual freedom in British society as an unquestionable good is having catastrophic

consequences on society, most especially on children, which are only too plain to see.

5. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that he came in human flesh, to die and rise again, in order to rescue us from our corrupt desires and to forgive us for the sins we have committed through submitting to them. The system of secular morality which sees the possession of sexual desires as a valid moral argument to justify the satisfaction of those desires assumes that human desires are intrinsically good and is therefore antithetical to Christianity at the most basic level.

6. The proclamation of the good news that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to rescue us from all wickedness and from God's righteous judgment upon it, and to build a holy people for his own possession, is a duty enjoined upon all Christians, most especially those ordained as the elders of churches. Christians must call all people to repent of their sins, trust in Christ alone for their forgiveness, and in the power of the Spirit live a new life in line with the revealed moral law of God as found in Scripture and affirmed by the Church throughout her history. Sinful sexual practices are just one type of sin, and homosexual activity is just one among many sinful sexual practices. Christ died to atone for sins, not to condone them; the Holy Spirit is sent to oppose the desires of the flesh, not to affirm them. Christians are not at liberty to modify this gospel; to do so removes all that is good about it, and ends up simply affirming the evils of contemporary society as good things from which we need no rescue. Again, this would be antithetical to Christianity at a most basic level.

7. To accept that the passage of time since the completion of the canon of Scripture has rendered certain passages of Scripture no longer applicable is to deny the central Christian claim that in the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus Christ, God has fully revealed himself once and for all. To relativise Scripture in this way is to assume that the incarnation was an insufficient revelation of God's truth, and to impugn God's sovereignty over all human societies and his ability to transcend and challenge them. Put simply, a God who was incapable of expressing himself, his gospel and his laws fully in the context of first century society, such that twenty first century society is in a position to correct him, would simply not be the Christian God at all. Once again, such a position is antithetical to the most basic doctrines of Christianity.

These things being so, we resolve the following:

A. Elders in the International Presbyterian Church are required to uphold the nature of marriage as the lifelong conjugal union between a man and a woman. They may not conduct, or in any way indicate approval of, the (fictitious) ‘marriage’ of same-sex couples, and to do so would be considered a sufficient breach of their ordination vows to merit their removal from office in the manner laid out in the Book of Church Order.

B. All people, no matter what their beliefs and lifestyle, past or present, are welcome at our services. Indeed, our mission to proclaim the gospel to all nations means that we are delighted for anyone to come to our churches to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and see in practice what it means to worship him. Our prayer is that all those who come to our churches will hear Christ’s call to repent of their sins and believe in the good news, and hearing will do so, leaving their old way of life behind and beginning a new life forgiven by Christ for their sins and transformed for a new way of life in his service. If a person or a couple’s current way of life is known as a same-sex ‘marriage’ this applies in just the same way as for anyone else.

C. Members of our churches are required to profess faith in Jesus Christ and live a life consistent in morals with that profession. Therefore while many members will have sinful sexual practices (as defined in paragraph 4 above) in their past, no-one engaged in and unrepentant of ongoing sinful sexual practices can be admitted to membership but are rightly to be called to repent of such sins and find forgiveness and the power to change in Christ. This remains true if the sinful relationship has been falsely given the label of ‘marriage’ according to UK law. If members should fall into sinful sexual practices of any sort it is the duty of the elders of the church to make loving use of church discipline, including where appropriate exclusion from participation in the Lord’s Supper, in the hope and prayer that God will bring them to repentance and therefore back into fellowship with the church. There are no circumstances in which a person who is engaged in a sinful sexual relationship of any sort, including (but not limited to) one legally recognised as a same-sex ‘marriage’, can be a member in good standing in an IPC church. To allow this would be a terrible failure of a church to believe in and proclaim the glorious goodness of the gospel of Christ to such a person, affirming them in their sin rather than calling them to the infinite riches that Christ has for them in the present and the future, if they will repent and believe in him.

D. Members of our church can expect to have the full support of presbytery if and when they face persecution from government, the courts,



employers or elsewhere for refusing to affirm or accept that the wickedness of sexual immorality is in fact a moral good, or for refusing to treat same-sex relationships, which inherently cannot be marriage, as if they were. In such a circumstance, a Christian brother or sister taking such a stand would merely be carrying out their Christian duty to their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our confident prayer is that many Christians will do so, whatever the cost, for the joy set before them and for the glory of God.