

Discerning Same-Sex Marriage in the PC(USA)

First Things First...

We cannot address such matters without first sharing the following beliefs:

- All of us stand under the truth that, *“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)
- All people are welcome in the fellowship of our church who seek to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. (Matthew 11:28; John 3:16-17; Acts 2:36-41; Romans 10:9-13)
- All people are to hold their convictions with both courage and humility, knowing that in the church there always have been and always will be deeply held but varying beliefs on many matters of faith. (Romans 14:1-10)

Tensions

- We also recognize the diversity of people in our congregation and that this particular matter is but ONE of many social issues facing the church.
- When dealing with marriage, we must not forget the issues of infidelity and divorce among ***heterosexual couples***, and widespread experimentation among young people.
- We must remember that marriage is a covenant before God and the congregation. It is a commitment for life and one that persons should not enter into carelessly.

Sexual Immorality

I Corinthians 6:18-19

***“Flee from sexual immorality.** All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”*

Sexual Immorality

We recognize that the Bible has much to say in the category of “sexual immorality”. So we recognize that fornication, prostitution, adultery, incest, orgies, and bestiality all fall into these categories (*as many Scriptures clearly tell us*).

We also recognize that lustful desires are also immoral. Jesus tells us, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” Matthew 5:27

Truth be told, we all stand under judgment on this!

Sexual Immorality

Does Scripture say that homosexuality is “sexually immoral” or considered a sin?

That’s the primary argument for the divide on our issue that leads us to same-sex marriage.

- If you believe that the practice of homosexuality is not a “sin” then it’s easy to understand why many approve of it.
- If you believe that the practice of homosexuality is a “sin” then it’s easy to understand why many disapprove of it.

Marriage

We recognize that God is the author of sex and intimacy and created it good. We also affirm that it is meant to be shared in a covenantal relationship which is instituted and blessed by God in marriage.

So our context for conversation has nothing to do with sexual promiscuity; rather it is about the covenant of marriage and God's design for it.

Paul actually says, *“Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”* 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

BOO Current Wording

W-4.9001

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract **between a woman and a man.** For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a **man and a woman** are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a **woman and a man** to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

BOO Changed Wording

W-4.9001

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment **between two people, traditionally a man and a woman,** to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.

***To Be Adopted June 21, 2015**

The Real Issue

- The discernment process for all of us is about whether or not the **church** (*for us FPC... since the PC(USA) has already voted in favor of it*) should **recognize and bless same-sex marriage**.
- We acknowledge that marriage is an institution governed both by the civil legal authority of the State (*serving Christians and non-Christians*) and the ecclesiastical standards governed by Scripture and our Confessions of Faith (*for Christians in the church*).
- If we truly recognize the separation of Church and State, then our personal opinions on state's rights, equality, etc... are irrelevant to our present discussion. ***The church is called to respond appropriately to the spiritual nature of the issue.***

The Issue for the Church

The primary question at hand is:

**Does God, based on God's Word (Scripture),
give us clarity and permission to recognize and
bless in God's name, same-sex marriage?**