

RESPONSE TO SUPREME COURT DECISION ON WHAT SOCIETY CALLS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

THE ISSUE

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court declared that the United States Constitution requires states to license and recognize marriages between two people of the same sex, making “marriage” equality officially the law of the land. Inasmuch as the church has historically functioned as an arm of the state in the conduct of marriage, and inasmuch as same- sex “marriage” is now the law of the land, in exercise of our conscience bound by Scripture, we explain our position.

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH TO CIVIL AUTHORITY

God instituted marriage and defines what marriage is in His Word. Because the consciences of faithful Christians are bound by God's Word, it is necessary that the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and its constituent congregations, set forth their position with respect to the Supreme Court decision.

The Bible teaches that all governing authorities have been appointed by God. For this reason, God counsels Christians to submit themselves to the governing authorities for His sake (Romans 13:1-5). We teach that it is contrary to God's revealed will for Christians to disobey the governing authorities.

The Bible also teaches that Christians must place their allegiance to God above their allegiance to the governing authorities (Acts 5:29) when the governing authorities command Christians to live or teach contrary to God's Word. We recognize that when Christians for conscience reasons disobey the governing authorities, they may need to suffer the consequences.

We also believe that Christians should seek to change civil laws in conflict with God's Word. All such efforts to change civil laws should be carried on within the framework of the law and not by armed conflict or civil disobedience. It is God's will that Christians overcome evil with good and that they not fight against evil by engaging in evil themselves (Romans 12:21).

MEMBERSHIP IN OUR CONGREGATIONS

Membership admittance and fellowship practices within our constituent congregations are defined by God's Word. We accept without reservation or qualification that acceptance into membership in our congregations is based on a mutual agreement in all the teachings of God's Word (Romans 16:17-18, 1 Corinthians 1:10).

The only requirement for membership in our congregations is that individuals state their agreement with us on the teachings of God's Word. Sex, race, or national origin is not a consideration for membership in our congregations.

It is common practice in our congregations for individuals to be received into membership following a course of instruction in God's Word and after they have been familiarized with the teachings and practices of the congregation they are planning to join. Each constituent congregation of our church

body has committed itself to the doctrinal platform of the Church of the Lutheran Confession drawn from the Bible. Since there is no membership in the Church of the Lutheran Confession apart from membership in a local congregation, such membership in a local congregation constitutes acceptance of the doctrinal platform of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

It is customary among us for children to become members of a congregation through the sacrament of baptism as infants, after which they are instructed in the teachings of God's Word and publicly pledge, on their confirmation day, to remain faithful to God's Word. For adults, membership is attained through affirmation of faith following a course of Bible instruction. Membership may also be attained through transfer from a sister congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose is defined in Article I of the *CLC Statement of Faith and Purpose*: "It is our single purpose to be a Christian church that proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. This Gospel is the only way people can know the true God and the way to eternal life ... (Matthew 28:18-20, John 17:3, Acts 4:12) ... We reject the idea of some that the main work of the church is to promote political and social causes ... As individuals, Christians will show fruits of their faith by concern for social and political issues, letting their light shine before others to the glory of God" (1 Peter 2:9, Matthew 5:13-16).

OUR STANCE TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS AND LESBIANS

God created Adam and Eve holy, without any vestige of sin. God is not responsible for the evils described in Galatians 5:19-21: "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." God did not create people as or to be homosexuals or lesbians any more than He created people as or to be thieves, child abusers, or alcoholics.

The evils God condemns in His Word are a direct consequence of Adam and Eve's fall into sin which was perpetrated by the devil (Genesis 3). All sin of whatever nature springs from hearts that have been corrupted by the fall into sin (Matthew 15:19). Those who claim that God made them as or to be homosexuals or lesbians are committing blasphemy against the holy name of God.

As confessors of the Lord Jesus Christ Who has redeemed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, and Who has washed us clean by His blood, we believe that God earnestly desires the salvation of homosexuals and lesbians. In love He gave His Son to die on the cross for all sinners without exception.

People who have homosexual and lesbian tendencies may be members of our churches so long as they

- understand what God's Word teaches with respect to such a condition
- understand that we will assist them in trying to overcome the condition

- are not practicing the sins associated with such a life-style, and
- are not promoting homosexuality and lesbianism as an acceptable life style.

Because Jesus died to take away our sin, sin in and of itself does not condemn before God. What condemns before God is an unwillingness to repent of sin. The purpose of church discipline, in cases of established impenitence, is an expression of Christian love intended to lead souls to repentance so they may be saved. Sin, in and of itself, does not exclude from the Christian congregation, but impenitence will compel the caring congregation to exercise discipline (1 Corinthians 5:4-5). It will do so with the prayer that the unrepentant sinner may be won back to Christ through godly repentance, as was the happy result in case of the incestuous man excommunicated by the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 2: 4-8).

God – in numerous places in His Word – condemns the *practice* of homosexuality and lesbianism: Genesis 19:1-23; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. In 1 Corinthians 6 the apostle Paul clearly shows that the sins of homosexuality and lesbianism are no more serious than any other sin, but that they are sin.

MARRIAGE—INSTITUTED BY and DEFINED BY THE LORD GOD

Our understanding of what constitutes marriage is determined by Scripture.

The Lord, the everlasting and eternal God, created the world (Genesis 1-2). On the 6th day of creation God created male and female (Genesis 1:26-27). God saw that it was not good for man to be alone so He created a woman and brought her to the man. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they (male and female) shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5).

The creation account in Genesis clearly shows that, when God instituted marriage, He intended it to be a lifelong union *between one man and one woman*. When no helper suitable was found for Adam, the Lord created a *woman* (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18-25). Any contrary interpretation of God's action and intent is a consequence, at least in part, of the evolutionary mindset of those who refuse to accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God.

The patriarchs had *female* partners. The Lord through the prophet Malachi warns *husbands* about dealing treacherously with their *wives* (2:13-15). On the other hand, Solomon by the Spirit of God praises the *wife* in whom her *husband* trusts (Proverbs 31:10-31).

Joseph was espoused to Mary, his betrothed *wife*. Jesus quoted Genesis when He spoke of *male and female*, and of being joined to one's *wife* (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:6-9). The apostle Paul speaks of the relationship of a *wife* to a *husband* (Ephesians 5, Colossians 3:18-19). He speaks of a man having his own *wife*, and a *wife* having her own *husband* (1 Corinthians 7:2).

The apostle John describes the Church as the bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2). He speaks of the marriage of the Lamb for whom *His wife* has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7-9). The apostle Paul uses the marriage relationship of *a man to a woman* to picture the relationship of

Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). The denial of marriage as the union of a man and a woman, and the promotion of same-sex unions destroys the beauty of “the great mystery ... concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32).

One blessing God gives to husbands and wives is the gift of children (Genesis 1:28, Psalm 127:3). Even the physical makeup of the man and the woman is evidence of God's will and intent.

THE PRACTICE OF OUR CHURCH AS RELATES TO SAME-SEX “MARRIAGE”

We do not conduct marriages of members or of people “off the street” without prior counseling, without discussing what constitutes marriage, and without explaining the duties and responsibilities of a man and woman toward each other in the marriage relationship. We expect that couples who are not of our fellowship will want to participate in an adult inquiry class of a length deemed necessary by the individual pastor. If we were asked to conduct same-sex unions we would proceed in the same way. We would in the course of the counseling sessions inform the individuals of our practice and show from Scripture what God says. In this scenario two possibilities present themselves. They could be convinced of the position set forth by the Word of God concerning marriage and choose not to enter into such a union, or they would persist in their intent. A faithful pastor would under no circumstance perform such a ceremony for same-sex couples. Neither would a congregation rent its facility, dedicated to the glory of God, for such a ceremony.

CONCLUSION

As an expression of our faith and practice we do not receive into membership people of same-sex marriages whether the ceremony was performed in another church, by a justice of the peace, or by any other authority of the state.

Further, the Word of God Who created the world and everything in it, who brought Adam and Eve together, and Who through Jesus Christ, born of a woman, reiterated the marital union to be one man and one woman, binds us to believe and practice according to His will. We take our stand on His Word and we cannot think, teach, or practice otherwise. Therefore we do not conduct ceremonies which society claims to unite people of the same sex in what according to Scripture, as well as historically, has been the union of one man and one woman. To do so would violate the Word, blaspheme God, and invite divine judgment, as is clearly shown in Scripture.

We reject any suggestion that our practice discriminates against homosexuals or lesbians, or that it is unloving. Our position has everything to do with concern for souls and faithfulness to God's Word. While we do not approve of same-sex unions, we recognize the *right of people under the law* to do as they choose. We ask only that those who disagree with us *respect our right under the law* to practice our faith according to the Word of God, and our conscience bound by that Word.

That sinful man chooses consciously or unconsciously to violate God's Word concerning marriage does not change the fact that marriage is what God declares it to be. Concerning our position on this issue, we choose to face the wrath of the world in time, rather than the judgment of God in eternity.

This is a statement of the Church of the Lutheran Confession addressing the stance of conducting same sex marriage ceremonies. It describes the stance of the church body. Congregations may choose to make their own statement, or if they choose adopt this statement.

Marriage Policy for _____ Lutheran Church (CLC)

The marriage policy of _____ Lutheran Church of _____, _____, is consistent with the beliefs on marriage which are taught in Scripture and held by member congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:20-24, Matthew 19:4-5). We believe that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-32).

The position of the Church of the Lutheran Confession is that homosexual unions are clearly and explicitly forbidden in the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 18:22,24; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10) because they are contrary to the Creator's design and will (Romans 1:26-27).

These positions and beliefs can be found in the "Online Library" section of the CLC Website, along with other statements, papers, and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and "marriage." We expressly reject any conclusion or implication that the Scriptural stand of the CLC with regard to marriage arises from animosity or ill-will toward, or desire to injure or impugn, any person or class of persons. Our positions and beliefs on this subject are based solely upon the foundation of Holy Scripture.

In accordance with our stand on the teachings of Scripture, and our right to the free exercise of religion under the United States Constitution, our pastors will not officiate at or participate in any marriages inconsistent with our biblical stand; further, our church property may not be used for any ceremony that is inconsistent with our biblical stance on marriage.

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