

Statement on Human Sexuality

An Official Statement of The Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada

Summary

God-honouring, life-enhancing sexuality finds its expression in the goodness of either celibate singleness or the life-long covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. Sexuality, the distinctiveness of our experience as male and female rather than as undifferentiated humans, is a feature of God's creation of humanity. Sexual intimacy is intended for marriage and sexual intimacy outside of this protective bond is therefore contrary to God's good design for humanity.

1. The Good Design in Creation

In the beginning, God created humans as relational beings¹, the inherent design of male and female reflecting God's image.² Sexuality, our maleness and femaleness, is a dimension of our embodied existence. Sexual difference and complementarity are thus good features of our identity.³ While identity, fulfillment, and the path to human flourishing are founded on a relationship with the Creator, God made sex as an expression of intimacy, love, and self-giving, to be experienced between one man and one woman in a lifelong covenant.⁴ Therefore, God-honouring sexuality finds expression in the goodness of either celibate singleness or faithful heterosexual marriage.⁵

2. Sin and its Effect on Sexuality

Sexuality has been profoundly distorted by humanity's fall into sin resulting in broken relationships with God and each other.⁶ Consequently, both sexual identity and sexual desire have been affected, resulting in confusion and the temptation to sin.⁷ To be tempted is not in itself sinful; sexual sin is the choice to act on temptation in thought, speech, or behaviour that falls outside of God's good boundaries.⁸

Furthermore, sexual sin results in significant harm to everyone involved⁹. This harm takes many forms, whether objectification,¹⁰ abuse, or exploitation and is contrary to the inherent dignity of all people as God's image bearers.¹¹ All are affected by this, though women and children tend to experience victimization most frequently.

3. The Reaffirmation of God's Design

To restore our broken world, God became human and lived among us.¹² Jesus perfectly embodied¹³ God's original design for human sexuality, affirmed the dignity of all people,¹⁴ spoke against those who would exploit others,¹⁵ and reaffirmed God's plan for sexual expression within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman.¹⁶ As a celibate single, Jesus also modelled a fulfilled life, complete and pure in his union with the Father and the Spirit, but also rich in friendship with both women and men.¹⁷ This example reminds us that our primary identity is found in intimate relationship with God and that sex is not necessary for human wholeness.¹⁸

¹ Genesis 2:18

² Genesis 1:26-27

³ Genesis 5:1,2

⁴ Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31

⁵ Hebrews 13:4

⁶ Genesis 3:16

⁷ Romans 1:24

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:13

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁰ Matthew 5:28

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:13

¹² John 1:14

¹³ Hebrews 4:15

¹⁴ Luke 7:36-50

¹⁵ Mark 12:38-40; Luke 4:18-21

¹⁶ Matthew 19:1-12

¹⁷ Luke 10:38-42

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 7:7,8

4. The Empowerment for Restored Human Sexuality

After his ascension, Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to indwell and empower his followers to experience ever-increasing holiness, including sexual wholeness.¹⁹ United by the Holy Spirit, the Church, as the new family of God²⁰, is called to demonstrate God's grace by inviting everyone into loving community through the practice of hospitality.²¹ The Church therefore affirms the dignity of all people and strives to treat everyone with respect.²² The Church is called to be a safe place of grace for all people, including those of us who are facing sexual temptations and failures, providing accountability and support in the midst of struggle.²³

Furthermore, the Church aspires to help people to experience the truth that healthy relationships with God and each other are more valuable than sexual gratification.²⁴ In this current age, as in any other age, some followers of Jesus will be called to lives of celibate singleness for the sake of the Kingdom of God.²⁵ In the age to come, humanity's hope of intimacy will be in loving union with God and each other,²⁶ a consummation that transcends our imagination.²⁷

Given the inherent dignity of all persons, and the call of followers of Christ to love our neighbours, we will not tolerate any language of hate or loathing toward those who hold to a differing view on human sexuality. C&MA churches, pastors, workers and members will treat all persons regardless of gender, belief or sexuality with respect and compassion.

5. Amendments

This Statement may be amended by a majority vote of General Assembly, written notice having been given prior to General Assembly.

Adopted – General Assembly 2018

¹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

²⁰ Mark 3:34-35

²¹ 1 Peter 4:8-10

²² Romans 12:9-18

²³ Galatians 6:1,2

²⁴ Matthew 19:27-30

²⁵ Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

²⁶ Matthew 22:30

²⁷ Revelation 22:1-5