

REMAINING FAITHFUL

Marriage & Methodism



The Methodist Church in Britain is considering redefining marriage to include same-sex partnerships. Discussions are already taking place, and decisions are due to be made at the Methodist Conference 2020.

This leaflet outlines reasons for retaining the present definition of marriage, which states:

'The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman.'

[Standing Order 011A (1)]

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GOD'S PLAN

Marriage has a divine origin and is part of the pattern of God's good creation, deeply written into our existence. When asked a question about marriage, Jesus answered quoting words from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and expanded on them:

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no-one separate."

Matthew 19:4-6.

This theme of marriage is threaded throughout the Bible. Indeed, it is so important that the whole biblical narrative both begins and ends with a marriage (Genesis 2 & Revelation 21).

GOD'S PURPOSE

God created male and female to live in union with each other - companions who were different and designed to work together, to complement each other, and to procreate.

Such marriage provides a solid foundation for family and society, and God blesses such a union (Genesis 1:28).

The Bible portrays marriage as the lifelong, exclusive covenant relationship between one man and one woman. (Matthew 19:4-6)

The Bible also affirms celibacy as a calling to be celebrated (1 Corinthians 7), exemplified in Jesus himself.

GOD'S WORD

It is impossible to redefine marriage without compromising the authority of the Bible. Clause 4 of the Methodist Deed of Union states:

'The doctrines of the evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice.'

If Methodism redefines marriage, it will also be redefining the role of the Bible. There is a foundational theological principle at stake here, which has implications far beyond the doctrine of marriage.

GOD'S WORLD

A redefinition of marriage will also affect our relationships with other churches and denominations within Britain and across the world. Within the Methodist family, this will especially be the case where our brothers and sisters in other countries around the world hold strongly to the authority of the Bible and the traditional teaching of the Christian Church.



OUR RESPONSE

Methodists seek to welcome all people lovingly, as Jesus does, regardless of sexuality. We believe we need to follow God's Word as the right way to live. This means that we cannot tolerate homophobia of any kind.

We recognise that current trends in society see marriage differently and acknowledge that sexual identity can be a cause of great tension for individuals and families. For the reasons given in this leaflet, however, we believe that the Methodist Church should not redefine marriage.

An increasing number of individuals, both lay and ordained, and whole churches, are expressing growing concern over the direction of travel within the Methodist Church in Britain and believe they could not in good conscience remain within the denomination if marriage is redefined.

We encourage you to hold this matter before God in prayer regularly, asking God's Spirit to help and guide us along this journey. If you share the concerns expressed in this leaflet, please take every opportunity you can to speak up for our existing definition of marriage at Church, Circuit, District and Connexional levels.

HOW CAN METHODIST EVANGELICALS TOGETHER HELP YOU?

MET is a renewal movement which is Bible-based and prayer-focussed. We seek to equip, encourage and support evangelicals in Methodism.

- Additional copies of this leaflet can be ordered from us, or can be downloaded from our website.
- If you are feeling isolated, and even intimidated, regarding these issues, we would like to be able to put you in touch with other like-minded Methodists in your area, to enable support, encouragement and prayer.
- You are welcome to contact us for help and support.
- Derek Balsdon, our MET Development Worker, and/or other MET partners may be able to come and share within your local meetings.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The Resources page of our website has other MET Marriage and Relationship documents to help facilitate debate, plus a list of resources from other organisations.