

Speaking Faithfully

The Marriage and Relationships Consultation (2019-2020)

The Marriage and Relationships Consultation takes place across the Connexion from autumn 2019 to spring 2020, and will be an opportunity for Methodists to discuss the Conference Report *God in Love Unites Us*.

As set out in the MET study guide response to the report (both available at www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/remaining-faithful). MET believes that the Church should remain faithful to the biblical and historical understanding of marriage as between one man and one woman, as well as the view that sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage falls short of God's ideal. The proposal that the Church revise its understanding of marriage and sexuality is unlikely to preserve the unity of the Church and will also make it difficult to speak with a clear voice on sexual ethics.

During the consultation, MET members will have an opportunity to share their views on the report. Such conversations are likely to be highly emotive, and it is important to speak the truth in love when sharing our views (Eph 4:15). While we may disagree with the views of others, we must do so with grace and kindness.

We encourage MET members to consult the resources on the MET website, and especially the Remaining Faithful study guide (available at the link above). These point to scriptural, historical and theological reasons for retaining the church's current position on sex and relationships.

A further helpful resource is the testimonies of same-sex attracted Christians who remain faithful to the biblical teaching on sex (see www.livingout.org; www.transformedbygodslove.com). The voices of such Christians are seldom heard in discussions on sexuality, and yet they show how faithfulness to Scripture in our sexuality is possible in today's changing context.

The Methodist Church has also produced Study Guide to support such consultations (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/the-marriage-and-relationships-study-guide>). This gives an idea of the kind of questions which will be asked, and the opportunity to think carefully in advance about how to respond.

Please do take every opportunity to contribute to the consultation, holding grace and truth together. In the end, only the District Synod votes will inform the Conference, and the Conference representatives will have an entirely free vote when they gather. As well as participating in circuit conversations, please find out from your Superintendent who your District Synod representatives are and write to them, setting out your views and asking them to be represented in the District consultation. Additionally, please consider writing to your Minister, Superintendent and District Chair, making the same points.

As well as attending District events, 'Remaining Faithful' regional gatherings will also take place over the Connexional year. These will be an opportunity to worship, explore the way forward, network, and pray together, (www.methodistevangelicals.org.uk/RFNregional).

Finally, we encourage all Methodists to pray for the consultation, and to ask that God will shape us as his holy and faithful people in the months ahead.