



**A VIEW FROM THE PEW  
RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**of**

**The Marriage and Relationships Task Group 2019**

**Entitled**

**“GOD IN LOVE UNITES US”**

**by**

**Armored J. Carlyon**

# PREFACE

## A VIEW FROM THE PEW

To be read alongside the report submitted to the 2019 Conference.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/the-2019-marriage-and-relationships-report/>

I have read through the report to the Methodist Conference 2019 'God in Love Unites Us' on more than one occasion ... making comments in the margin as I went along 'the journey.'

I responded in 1979 to the first consultation to the Methodist report on Human Sexuality as a member of the Cornwall Community Standards Association.

'The journey' for me, therefore, has been a continuous one never thinking or believing the Methodist Conference of 2019 could possibly agree to place such recommendations on the table for consultation.

I am a life long Methodist and Local Preacher with a Bible Christian background. My great, great, great grandmother being Elizabeth Collett (nee Tonkin) who started preaching on the eve of her 20th birthday in the village of Feock in Cornwall in 1782 in the last decade of Wesley's life and continued to be a woman preacher in the Trispen and Pilleigh areas until 1804 when Jabez Bunting, with the support of the Wesleyans, finally managed to curtail the activities of women preachers.

During the consultation period I have attended the meetings held in Cornwall one of which I had to leave due to remarks made to the members of the Methodist Chapels present concerning their prejudice and attitude towards homosexuals, lesbians and transgender persons. These were made by a Minister sent down by the Connexion to take part in the meeting.

I left the meeting and sat on the wall outside and broke my heart in a way that in 80 years I have never experienced. Yes, in retrospect it may have been an Epiphany - it was a beautiful summer's day at Hayle in Cornwall but all I could see before me was a lane or pathway lined by dead charred trees portrayed as a picture drawn in charcoal - just shades of grey and black stretching out before me - utter desolation - bare charred broken branches strewn across the pathway. The grief I experienced was indescribable.

I realised in those few minutes that the Methodist Church of which I have been part of since I was born would never be the same again. The situation ahead of us seems bleak - good works are not sufficient - what is of such importance is the saving of souls for Christ.

Since that day in Hayle I have longed to hear an ordained Minister of the Methodist Church stand in a pulpit and warn people of the implications of the path being advocated by Conference but the silence has been deafening.

Following the Conference vote it was emphasised to local congregations the matter of paramount importance which needed to be discussed was whether Chapels wished to 'marry' same-sex couples on their premises. In my opinion nothing could be further from the truth. In order to allow 'same-sex' couples to marry in our Churches the official Doctrine of the Methodist Church will, of necessity, have to be re-written. This in itself will have a profound effect on Ministers and Local Preachers, many of whom will no longer feel able to give their annual re-affirmation to abide by the Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church and will therefore, have to stand down from preaching within the Methodist Church. Furthermore it is evident from the report the matter of the 'reinterpretation' of the Scriptures. Should these recommendations be passed the original Greek/Hebrew translations will no longer be acceptable. Many of the Letters written by St. Paul and the Book of Jude will either be deleted or avoided. Much of St. John will be discarded as it concerns the truth (John Chapter 8) - not forgetting parts for Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. What a sad situation we find ourselves in. So I read the report again and realised it was necessary to devote two hours every evening throughout the season of Lent 2020 in responding paragraph by paragraph to the document as presented to the Methodist Conference 2019.

It has now become evident to me, as a Bible believing Christian, the Methodist Church has been infiltrated by liberal theology to such an extent that the time has come for those Methodists who believe the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God be prepared to make a stand. To stand alone for the truth is not an easy place to be in this permissive society when the views expressed do not accord with the present politically correct environment.



Easter Day has now arrived - I have completed my response to the Report published by the Task Group and have included a Bibliography of books and articles I have studied along 'my journey'.

Towards the end of his life **John Wesley** wrote these words - *'here I am; I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a bible Christian, not almost but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this or not at all ...'*

I pray the Methodist Conference when it meets in 2021 will take heed of these words.

Armored J. Carlyon (Mrs.) 28th April, 2020



### How to read the response to the report

The page numbers refer to the report as submitted to the Methodist Conference 2019 - the link to the document is <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/the-2019-marriage-and-relationships-report/>

The report commences on page 59 to 124 (shown in brackets)

The list of contents refer to the response to each chapter

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>2</b>
God in Love Unites Us - Introduction (page 60) .....	4
Section 1 - God has made us to be in relationships and to be sexual. (Page 67) .....	5
Section 2 - God guides us in all our relating (Page 79) .....	7
Section 3 - God's guidance for marriage: developing our vision. (Page 93) .....	12
Section 4 - Widening the practice of Marriage. (Page 103) .....	14
Section 5 - Next Steps for the Methodist Church (Page 112) .....	19
Conference Recommendations (Page 116) .....	21
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> (Page 119) .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Challenges to the Task Group</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Bibliography .....	25
Appendix 1 - John Harris .....	Back Cover
Appendix 2 - Cornwall Community Standards Associations Committee .....	26

Front cover photo Interior of Billy Bray's "Three Eyes" Chapel, Kerley Downs, Chacewater. Truro.

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# INTRODUCTION

My main contention is included in the opening statement “the Task Group should bring a report on the matters which could include any proposed changes to Standing Orders, were the definition of marriage to change.” Please may I understand how and why the Methodist Church in the UK can even begin to contemplate it has the authority to REDEFINE MARRIAGE? I also need to know how the Task Group feels it is able to ‘re-interpret’ the Bible - not just in one passage but in numerous passages to fit their “journey” and meanwhile expecting all the Methodist people to remain faithful to the Connexion.

**0.1.2** The report states “We believe that God has made us to be in relationships and has shown us how to flourish through those relationships”.

What a very strange statement. The word “relationships” is a very loose word, it can mean almost anything. For instance I have a relationship with my cat or I think I have but in reality the cat has a relationship with “Dreamies” which are kept in a screw top jar by the side of my chair! What will happen to the “relationship” when the Dreamies pot becomes empty? Will the cat end the so called “relationship” with me and move across to my husband’s chair where the screw top pot is full of Dreamies?

You may consider this illustration frivolous but is this not what is happening on a frequent basis in society today? When one partner fails to ‘deliver the goods’ whatever the “goods” happen to be, then as there is little or no commitment they move on to the next “relationship” - seemingly not considering the hurt caused to the one left behind.

## **0.2 Why is the task necessary?**

**0.2.2** “As part of its calling and mission, the Methodist Church must engage with the reality of how people are living today”.

What exactly has “calling and mission” to do with how people are living today? I have always understood that our ‘calling’ as Methodists is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our ‘mission’ to win souls for Christ.

As an elected Independent Local Authority Councillor this section reads as though it has been written by the Adult and Social Services department rather than the Methodist Church. The last bullet point seems to be all about endorsing the Equality Act - why should the Methodist Church find it so important to endorse Government policy? One just wonders whether there are Government Grants available if the Methodist Church endorses these recommendations. I have been an elected member in Local Government since 1973 and I therefore have some knowledge as to how the system works. I find the assumption that changing our theology and practice ... will enable us all to flourish as a people who hold contradictory convictions - is assuming rather too much of those sitting in the pews Sunday by Sunday and contributing to the Head Quarters who are promoting such a divisive report at their expense.

Yes, as Methodists we are committed to one another no matter what the ‘sexuality’ of some members might be. I cannot recall anyone shunning or being unkind to anyone who might consider themselves to be a homosexual or lesbian and yet this is what the Methodist Minister assumed, telling us he was in a same sex partnership with another Methodist Minister, when he “lectured us” at a meeting held at Hayle Methodist Church last summer until I interrupted and reminded him that the meeting was supposed to be a “conversation” not a “lecture”.

**0.3.3** It is stated in this paragraph “you will therefore find the Bible being referred to in a number of different ways.” I cannot determine which translation has been used neither is there mention of seeking/studying the original Greek/Hebrew texts. In fact this endorses my view that the report is neither scholarly nor in many instances accurate.

**0.3.4** Certainly God calls for us to be ‘holy’. This paragraph includes, what I consider to be “muddled thinking” ... ‘It is from within this rich and varied landscape that our reflections have emerged ..... ?????’

## **0.4 What is in the report?**

‘.... and look to see how sexuality can be celebrated more fully in our Church as one aspect of God’s gracious goodness.’

Why is the Task Group seemingly obsessed with sex and sexuality and considers it should be ‘celebrated more fully’ in our Churches? We hear about nothing else throughout the week - I personally feel the Church is a refuge where we can leave the world behind for a few hours. Of course there has to be opportunities for “conversations” and advice from those qualified to give it but often these matters should be considered as confidential matters.

**0.4.3** See comments later in document.

**0.4.7** See comments later in document.

**0.4.8** “developing theology” is rooted in the God of LOVE. Here again, throughout the whole report, I find the word LOVE to be loosely translated. You do not state whether you are referring to:



**Agape** - being God's type of love - which is unconditional;

**Phileo** - brotherly love or

**Eros** - romantic/sexual love.

A definition is essential each time the report refers to "love".

"The outworking of the theology we offer also call for repentance with regard to how we have sometimes treated each other'. Again an almost unintelligible statement. As I read the statement I assume it refers to gender but there are far more ways we hurt one another in our Church communities ... and sadly this document entitled "God in Love Unites Us" and the discussions which have ensued has caused and is still causing untold grief and distress up and down the length of this country.

The question comes to mind "Why should we want to find a way to stay together?" Many of us who are filled with grief find we have little in common with this report which does nothing to protect our Church, our traditional family unit, our children or our society. Should the recommendations before Conference 2020 be passed in their present form, the interpretation by the Task Group of the Holy Bible - will differ greatly to those of us who believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God. Preaching is already becoming difficult with many of the passages now assuming double meanings... the same applies to many of our precious hymns.

The statement concludes "*This will enable us to offer more humbly and joyfully the riches we are uncovering to all God's world.*" So exactly how is the Task Group going to enable this to happen?

All I can envisage is division within our congregations, closure of Chapels and the hastening of the demise of the Methodist Church within the United Kingdom.

Maybe this is the purpose of the report.

So we now come to the main part of the document - Conference Agenda 2019.

## SECTION 1

### **1 God has made us to be in relationships and to be sexual. (Page 67)**

#### **1.1 Made in God's image.**

##### **1.1.1 and 1.1.2 God is love.**

Have you never read Exodus 32 and how God withdrew his presence? Why did he withdraw His presence because he was angry with the behaviour of His chosen people. Did He not punish them when they turned their back on Him and began to worship the golden calf? It was Moses who pleaded with God to lead His people once again to the Promised Land. Surely it is timely to remind ourselves again of Jonathan Edwards famous sermon "Sinners in the hand of an angry God - based on Deuteronomy 32:35. How exactly does the Task Group define "sin" in the realm of sexuality or does it no longer exist?

**1.1.3 "redeeming love"** no mention of the message from John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness (winnowing fork - and the wrath to come) Satan is mentioned 84 times in the New Testament but perhaps the Task Group have "airbrushed" Satan out of their reckonings?

**1.1.4** Surely before this is possible we need to be "born again"? We can do none of these things in our own strength but only with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

#### **1.2 Made to relate to God.**

**1.2.2** This new covenant relationship was celebrated by the community of Christ's Church. I assume this paragraph relates to the early Christian Church but no mention is made of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the changes that were expected in their lives to become part of the new covenant.

#### **1.3 Made to 'relate' to others**

See remarks "Introduction"

**1.3.2** Here again, in my opinion, the meaning of the word "love" is not made clear.

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**1.3.4** Although I may agree with the statements made. To me this is one of the saddest observations of society in the UK today. What this is saying is that the "traditional family" which has always been considered to be the backbone of our society and in fact any society, is no longer considered necessary.

THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF THIS REPORT I CAN ONLY FIND TWO REFERENCES TO THE WORD CHILD/ CHILDREN.

The Task Group seemingly accept this position as the norm - does no one in the Methodist Church accept that we have failed to honour the traditional family unit? We have failed our children - we have stepped back and allowed the "world" to take care of them. There are fewer and fewer children in our schools who have ever heard of Jesus - this is where we should be repenting.

All I am reading page after page is about sexuality - how "I" must live a fulfilled life - there is no mention about the fact that there are times when "self" has to be forgotten and the future of society as a whole requires the "Church" to set the example - the Book of Offices reminds us each year of our Christian duty - the first Covenant service was used by Wesley in 1755 at Spitalfields.

'I AM NO LONGER MY OWN, BUT YOURS. PUT ME TO WHAT YOU WILL, RANK ME WITH WHOM YOU WILL; PUT ME TO DOING, PUT ME TO SUFFERING; LET ME BE EMPLOYED FOR YOU OR LAID ASIDE FOR YOU; EXALTED FOR YOU OR BROUGHT LOW FOR YOU; LET ME BE FULL LET ME BE EMPTY; LET ME HAVE ALL THINGS, LET ME HAVE NOTHING;....' (1975 Methodist Service Book)

I have always understood this to be entering into a Covenant of total submission to the will of God in every aspect of my life however I understand some "people" are no longer comfortable with these original words and they have now been what I consider to be 'watered down'.

So please explain to me how the Task Group now interprets these words in respect of the proposed Re-definition of Marriage which includes Same Sex couples and the condoning of Cohabitation, when the Bible, as it is translate in the RSV does not endorse such unions?

In the footnote to page 69 the report quotes John Wesley "no holiness but Social Holiness". I would contend that this quote has been taken out of context. The original context of this saying was in relation to the necessity for Christian fellowship. Reading John Wesley's life it was obvious that he did not just tell others how to live their lives but rather he set the standard/example in his own life by which he expected others to live their lives... I have never found in any of his writings he promoted same sex unions or cohabitation.

#### **1.4 Made to relate as sexual beings**

**This paragraph is the most distressing of the whole report.**

It appears the Task Group have immersed themselves in learning of every sort of sexual activity/depravity. The Task Group then moves on to "draw insights from emerging theologies" as part of the Methodist Church's ongoing theological thinking ... as the Task Group admit they are not experts - so in come the radicals "Stonewall" and the other groups listed in the report.

I have acquainted myself with the writings/views of publications by Browne in 2007: Rogers 2009: Holland 2008: Althus Reid in 2008 On Queer Theology and Liberation Theology.

However, no mention is made in the report of actually inviting Methodist Local Preachers or members of various congregations for their contributions to the report, the people who actually pay the Administration staff and Ministerial stipends.

Then follows the 'Glossary'

It distresses me to read that ordained ministers are taking into consideration some of the publications listed on pages 73 and 74 seemingly in order to prove their recommendations. It is heartening, however, to read that "sexual intimacy can be affected by age, and health". It is in testing times such as these that one's love and Christian faith keep a "traditional" marriage together but I have not read of any encouragement for times such as these.

**1.4.6** Yes, sex was dangerous, many women died in childbirth.

**1.4.7** The world population explosion may actually be due to clean water, food and the advance of medical practices. Maybe due to the recent "Coronavirus" the Task Group may like to rethink this paragraph. Have you not read about the Black Death and the effect it had on the population?

**1.4.8** Mention is made in this paragraph of contraception. There are various methods of contraception and as is rightly stated it has often been exercised by men over women. However, no mention is made of the promiscuity this has encouraged and the enormous increase in Sexually Transmitted Diseases which has cost and will continue to cost the NHS vast sums of money causing many many young peoples' physical and mental health to be affected for life.

**1.4.9** Yes we do "find it difficult to talk" about such subjects and the whole of the consultation and "thinking" of the Task Group in this report has caused and is still causing a great deal of distress. Most of us find it difficult to understand why it has been necessary to study sexuality in such detail but now we know because it is obvious

from the report that the LGBT lobby has been active within the Methodist Church and the liberal interpretation of the Bible is being promoted in order that the congregations will feel able to accept the re-definition of Marriage. The Definition of Marriage is no longer to be just between “one man and one woman” but is to include people of the same sex. Understandably this is not found to be acceptable with many members not only within the Church but outside the Church as well. The Task Group has always been aware the matter would be divisive - split congregations - place ordained ministers in untenable situations but in spite of this have proceeded to write recommendations which are written in such a way as not to be readily understood. This is the reason so many people have not responded or left their forms blank in my Circuit.

I would question the necessity of furthering the “theology of sexuality”- who is this exercise going to benefit?  
**And paramount to all this will it save souls for Christ?**

### **1.5 The Diversity of Sexuality**

This paragraph graphically describes the journey of the Task Group into the ‘real world’ .... of Science, the EDI Committee, World Health Organisation who take a “broad approach to understanding human health” and the answer is that “sexuality is a complex phenomenon ...” what a surprise and so the Task Group now has a greater understanding. So we are no longer being made male and female as God pronounced .... we can be anybody/ anything we want to be on any day of the week.

As I read the report and the apparent acceptance of the views of these “experts”, the Methodist Church is either wittingly or unwittingly contributing in what I consider to be the deconstruction of society. Experiments of downgrading the traditional family unit has happened before in other countries but the results have been catastrophic for society as a whole and the Leaders have been obliged to reverse the ideology. Wesley himself understood this and feared anarchy.

**1.5.3** This is not something new - as a farmer I am aware that it very occasionally it happens in the world of farming. I am also aware it occurs very occasionally in the human race but these anomalies arise and if they cause a problem then appropriate advice and help is available to the individual. This cannot be a valid reason for the Methodist Church to redefine Marriage.

Taking into account the text in the report 1.5.3 - 1.5.5 I cannot understand what this has to do with introducing Same Sex Marriage in the Methodist Church.

And so I come to **1.5.6** and **1.5.7**

How does the Task Group suggest that the members of each congregation better celebrate our sexual beings? Are we to relate our sexual experiences and feelings to one another over the past week when we meet together on Sunday?.. that is if we have had any.

I ask you to read Appendix 2 - John Harris

I suggest that the Task Group analyse the priorities in life for many people in the world. The essentials for life are food, shelter and water - after that everything is a luxury.

## **SECTION 2**

### **2 God guides us in all our relating (Page 79)**

and so we now explore the practices of good relationships.

Here again we have no definition of what kind of “love” to which the task force is referring.

My understanding of the theology about God’s love to the human race was that He sent His only Son into the world who by His death upon the cross took the sins of the world upon Himself in order that our sins may be forgiven and that we, believing in Him, might have life everlasting. I cannot recall anything about “good relating”.

**2.1.2** Are these merely environmental statements?

**2.1.3** Are these merely environmental statements?

**2.1.4** At this point I have had to reach for my Bible to remind myself what God’s word has to say about a “community of people”. The NIV reads “But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the MAN to fall into a deep sleep ... then the Lord God made a woman from the rib ... and brought her to the man. ... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh...”. I would suggest this is all about marriage between one man and one woman - it is perfectly clear. ... I can find nothing which suggests “various forms of relationships” - I would respectfully suggest that this is wishful thinking on behalf of the the Task Group or what I would consider to be an unsuccessful attempt to re-interpret the Word of God.

**2.1.5** “Co-creating requires us to develop new means of protecting the earth.” The Task Group gives us no information as to how we as the Methodist Church are to develop new means of protecting the earth - I look forward to receiving your views on this statement.

**2.1.6** And so I turn the page - abruptly leaving behind the question as to how the Methodist Church is to develop new means of protecting the earth and find myself in a dissertation about God’s Kingdom on earth and how that after Christ’s resurrection “Then and now a purpose for the relationships of the followers of Jesus is to help bring in God’s Kingdom “ - here again we are not given any guidance as to how we are to achieve this goal and its relevance to the report.

**2.1.8** Here we have 4 bullet points and the following sentence “Whenever we see these purposes at work in relationships we can look to celebrate the presence of God”. Can we? Is the Task Group really sure about that?

Bullet point 3 states “Procreation” (but not essentially so). You will recall that the “Shakers” shunned procreation. They were celibate and did not marry and consequently, and as a “sect” have “died out”.

I would suggest that the list is not limited to Christians - non believers often contribute far more to society than Christians.

**2.1.9** This paragraph is somewhat confusing. Is the Task Group referring sexual relationships between one man and one woman? It would be helpful to the readers of this report to understand exactly what the Task Group understand by “good sexual relationships” ... how many “good relationships” may one have in one’s life? Furthermore one partner of the “relationship” may consider it to be “good” while the other partner may consider it to be otherwise... What exactly does “good relating” have to do with “helping care for the creation and love God”. I would suggest this paragraph either needs a rewrite or deletion.

## **2.2 The Qualities of good relating**

**2.2.1 I find this paragraph very disturbing.** Is the Task Group insinuating that Christ had “sexual relationships” “deep intimacy” with Martha, Mary and Lazarus and the ‘beloved disciple’? If so, then say so.

This section refers to the attempted stoning of the woman caught in adultery - yes, Jesus highlighted the fact that those who attempted to stone her may well have been guilty themselves of such acts but you omit to quote the words of Jesus “Neither do I condemn thee; **go and sin no more**” John 8 v. 11. Surely by His words he was endorsing the law that adultery was a “sin”?

**2.2.2** God expects us to be holy as He is holy. “Because it is written, be holy for I am holy” 1 Peter 1:17 KJV. In the 4th bullet point we are referred to Galatians Chapter 5 v. 22-23 but I would refer you to the v. 19 sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; ... Drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, the those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

I can see nothing in the Bible which can be described as “good relating” other than “do as you would be done by”.

Yes, Paul describes “love” but here again you do not specify which word in the Greek is being used. In one sentence the Task Group is supposedly majoring on sexual intercourse and in the next “agape” or is it being suggested that “love” is a word that covers all situations? As referred to before, in the Greek there are 3 words for ‘love’ - simply translated as follows:

**Phileo** - brotherly love

**Eros** - romantic or sexual love

**Agape** - Agape is God’s type of love. It is unconditional love and does what helps or benefits the other person.

We need to remind ourselves that God’s love is steadfast, just and merciful Isaiah Chapter 61 v. 8

**2.2.3** I would suggest that to enable us to be true followers of Christ we need to experience “conversion” there is no way we can hope to grow in holiness in our own strength. I quote from F.W. Bourne -“The King’s Son” the words of Billy Bray the Cornish Miner evangelist - on his ‘conversion’ “All the forenoon of the next day he spent in crying for mercy, food being almost untasted and conversation with his ‘partner’ in the mine in the afternoon nearly ceased. That day passed away, and nearly the whole night he spent upon his knees. The ‘enemy’ “thrust at him sore”. On the next day he had ‘almost laid hold of the blessing’ but the time came for him to go to the mine... . To his chamber he again repaired. Beautifully simple and touching are his own words.”I said to the Lord ‘*Thou hast said They that ask shall receive, they that seek shall find, and to them that knock the door shalt be opened, and I have faith to believe it.*’ In an instant the Lord made me so happy that I cannot express what I felt. I shouted for joy. I praised God with my whole heart for what he had done for a poor sinner like me; for I could say, The Lord hath pardoned all my sins. I think this was in November 1823. I remember this, that everything looked new to me, the people, the fields, the cattle, the trees. I was like a man in a new world. I spent the greater part of my time praising the Lord. I was a new man altogether. I told everyone I met what the Lord had done for my soul.....



I have been glad ever since!” (I have the privilege of serving as one of five Trustees of Billy Bray’s “Three Eyes Chapel - Bible Christian Chapel since 1983 - The Chapel is now Independent.)

Maybe the Methodist Church can now be likened unto the Church of Laodicea - neither hot nor cold ... Rev 3:15-17

#### **2.2.4 -2.2.5**

“By the grace of God transforming our hearts and the guidance of the Spirit, we continue to deepen our understanding of what this Christ-like “holy relating” means. The paragraph continues “We now see that women and men are equal persons... “ but then we are told in bold print the Task Group recommends that the Conference affirms the following summary understanding of the principles or qualities of good relating. So now I am totally confused - please explain why “holy relating” has now become “good relating”.

And so we come to the bullet points -

“All significant relationships should be built on self giving love...” so how does Conference define “significant relationships”? What exactly are “significant relationships” - living together for a few years? Having a baby out of wedlock? How many significant relationships can one have in a life time as long as each one is built on “self giving love”?

#### **2.2.6** So now we arrive at the aim of the Task Group to promote Same Sex Marriage within the Methodist Church.

Why is it ‘sad that the Methodist people have not always been good at talking about this and supporting one another in it’? These matters are personal - they are private between a husband and wife. I do not expect my husband to talk about our sexual relationship and he does expect me to speak about it either. It would be breaking confidences. I have never knowingly criticised my husband in public or spoken about his views on sexual matters.

I am not in a “mixed-sex” marriage - I am in a state Holy Matrimony ordained, as I understand it, by God as the only way Society can operate successfully. I strongly object to the “observations” made on our Methodist congregations by the Task Group in respect of discussions of sexual intimacy. The Task Group may consider themselves ‘liberal minded’ and “modernists” authorised to re-interpret the Scriptures, worldly wise about sexual issues but there are many members who are greatly concerned not only about the proposed change of Doctrine of the Methodist Church but also about the lack of moral standards in society. They are only too aware of the consequences of turning one’s back on God and His statutes which result in every rising numbers of divorces, abortions, STIs and mental illness. No reference is found in the report of the alarming rise in STIs and other forms of sexual disease which often lead to drug addiction, depression, homelessness and in extreme circumstances suicide.

Statements concerning, shifting the focus on good relationships is, in my opinion, actually meaningless. So is the Task Group expecting us to preach on “good relating” and give Power Point presentations on the subject?

### **2.3 The patterns and practices of good relating**

#### **2.3.1 - 2.3.5**

The Task Force gives a brief overview of their findings in respect of the “patterns” of good relating throughout history and the Bible. I seem to recall that Jesus, referring to either the fall of Jerusalem or the Second Coming refers to people being “given in marriage”. I would suggest that the advice given by Jeremy Taylor in his book ‘The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living’ was upholding the general view of all things in Christian living should be undertaken in moderation. Following this advice ensures that one does not pursue any activity to excess thereby enabling one’s mind/life to be focused primarily on God and His ways.

#### **2.4 Good Sexual Relating**

#### **2.4.1** And so we come to “reflection time” of the Task Group. I would suggest that there are practices within heterosexual marriages in which Christians should not indulge. The words from the hymn “let no part of day or night from sacredness be free but all my life in every part be fellowship with Thee” should be the discipline by which Christian marriages should be conducted /lived.

In a Christian marriage it should never be forgotten that God is part of that marriage and no deviant practices of any description should defile the marriage bed.

#### **2.4.2 - 2.4.3**

Chastity is a lovely word. I often find those who have dedicated themselves to serving God alone have beautiful faces. I am not referring to physical features but just an openness and loveliness in their demeanour and appearance.

#### **2.4.4** Fidelity is essential in a marriage, in fact I would interpret the word as trust. When fidelity is established there is no need to be checking on the iphone/smartphone as to the whereabouts of one’s husband/wife because

there is absolute “trust” no liasons/activities will take place contrary to the vows taken at the marriage ceremony. This is a paramount discipline if a marriage is to survive. I fail to understand the relevance of the last sentence in this paragraph which seems to allude that sexual intimacy is acceptable outside of marriage so long as there is a “mutual trust”.

**2.4.5** It is stated that “intimate expressions of sexuality can deepen the bonds between couples and also at the same time increase their vulnerability and potential to be be hurt and to hurt”. Surely this is why the Methodist Church should be encouraging/exhorting young people to keep themselves chaste until they find a someone with whom they feel they can spend the rest of their lives.

**2.4.6** A strange paragraph “as people become more intimate with one another...” Is this statement referring to the behaviour in the “world” or within the “Church” or both? I fail to understand the relevance of Note 99 in this context.

**2.4.7** This claims to be a summary of the points made in the previous paragraphs. If it is, then why is it not possible to make the points clearly?

It reads like Local Government jargon - meaningless and unintelligible. “Then in turn the couple,,,” to whom is this referring? Marriage between a man and a woman or same sex couples? Clarification would be helpful.

**2.4.8** The Task Group now “believes that sexual activity should not be seen merely as an interaction with someone to fulfil a particular purpose...”. so how else are babies conceived? How else does one hope to have the longed for baby?

And so in what circumstances is God going to share His vision for “good relating”?

On a “one night stand”?

“Good relating” for a month?

Cohabitation of man/woman, cohabitation of two men or two women for a year?

## **2.5 Contemporary sexual relating**

This paragraph is an overview of the present situation. However, the Task Group states “there has been a growing acceptance that the choices people make and the things that they do are personal and private matters, unless... harm or abuse.” There may be “all sorts of sexual intimacy” but there is ALWAYS A PRICE TO BE PAID... ALWAYS. Casual sex can often cause untold physical and mental damage due to sexually transmitted diseases, drink and drugs can often be contributing factors and with no moral boundaries, life is then in danger of becoming frenetic. All these outcomes then become the responsibility of the state and in the long run the Tax payer.

**2.5.2** The Task Group has been open and honest in recognising the reality of the state of moral bankruptcy we now have in this country. Just because I am a Methodist does not mean that I fail to recognise what is going on around me. Has it not occurred to the Task Group that members of our congregations may well be aware of what they might consider to be the “unorthodox” way of life of some of its members, but due to the political correctness imposed upon each one of us, any mention or criticism could cause untold problems.

I have now responded to 31 pages of the Conference Report of 2019 and I am still unsure of the definition given by the Task Group to the expression “good relating”. We are now informed that “good relating” is an inclusive expression which includes married men and women and same sex couples.

## **2.6 Cohabitation**

**2.6.1** As the Task Group so rightly states there are many reasons for an increase in Cohabitation as opposed to marriage. I would add to the list the exorbitant cost of “becoming married” and now that the marriage can take place anywhere, as long as the Registrar is present, Methodist Churches, on the whole are not as attractive as the Parish Church or on the top of a Cornish cliff!

**2.6.2** “People live together for a variety of reasons” do they?... well that is a profound statement.

At last we have the word “children”. Surely the whole reason why God ordained marriage between one man and one woman was that should there be children from that union, they would be brought up to love the Lord their God and to honour their Father and Mother in a secure and loving and safe environment. You will no doubt be aware that children and young people are now in constant fear that their Mummies and Daddies may divorce one another. Divorce was a rarity when I was a child and I did not have this anxiety. So what better way is there to bring up children than their biological mother and father have committed themselves to one another publicly?

It cannot be right to condone Cohabitation when there are children involved every effort should be made to ensure they have a secure and lasting family unit in which to flourish. In my opinion one of the serious failings/flaws of this Report is the seeming lack of consideration of the children involved in this “good relating” and secondly the effect good/bad of this “good relating” to the wider family.

**2.6.3** The Task Group begin with the premise that cohabitation and various other forms of intimate relationship have become well established and generally accepted. Perhaps it would have been helpful to list the “various other forms of intimate relationship... which are generally accepted” in order that the members of the Methodist Church are under no misapprehension as to which intimate relationships they refer and decide whether in fact the “intimate relationships” are in fact generally accepted and by whom. Are these promiscuous relationships between a man and a woman, transient same sex relationships, polygamy? Clarification of this point is essential because the Methodist Church is then exhorted to encourage “good relating” (Google does not seem to be able to give me a definition of this phrase). No details as to how this aim is to be achieved and by whom.

This surely can only be undertaken by those who are trained to undertake such work and fully understand the confidential nature of their vocation.

**2.6.4** The Conference is now recommended to accept the summary understanding of cohabitation.

Is the Task Group sure that God is present within the “love” of human beings drawn to each other in any circumstances? The perception and the statistics that are available to me do not encourage me to agree with the statement. Does God actually agree with what seems to be a short term commitment which ends when the “grass seems greener on the other side of the fence”?

If the Methodist Church is now changing its Doctrine and condoning Cohabitation surely there have to be some guidelines/limits on the behaviour of such couples but these have not been specified.

Surely the second bullet point is expecting too much of the average member. How do we know that the love of God is present in these circumstances?

I am beginning to wonder if the Task Group has a “direct line” to God when making such statements!

The third bullet point states the Church has an important calling. Where in Scripture/the Methodist Doctrine does it claim that as members we are expected to “generally accept” cohabitation as the norm? By all means we should encourage total commitment by the marriage of one woman to one man but this statement does not differentiate between the traditional marriage or same sex marriage.

## **2.7 Civil Partnerships**

**2.7.1** This is a helpful paragraph reminding us of the change in legislation since 2004. The Methodist Church has up until now seemingly avoided making any decision which would affect the Doctrine of the Methodist Church.

**However, this report is taking the Methodist Church into deep waters.**

The Task Group is knowingly taking the “courageous” step proposing changes to the Doctrine of the Methodist Church which will cause division, grief, anxiety, loss of membership which in turn will put the future of the Church at risk. One cannot but help asking whether in fact this is the “hidden agenda”?

**2.7.2** And so the Task Group “reflects” on the present legislation and considers it would be appropriate to welcome those who have entered into a Civil Partnership whether as a man and a woman or same sex couples and offer them “marriage”. *I note that further comments can be found in 2.9.*

However, in a marriage between one man and one woman the marriage has to be consummated to become a legal union because it is possible to have a marriage “annulled” and if “marriage” is now to embrace same sex marriages this does appear to complicate matters. I am given to understand that because same sex couples are unable to comply, it becomes obvious “consummation” is no longer a requirement of marriage. “What a tangled web we weave.” Never mind The Methodist Publishing House will be busy printing yet another “Book of Offices”.

## **2.8 LGBTQI+**

**2.8.1** I accept that there have been ongoing discussions at Conference on this subject. However, I have never encountered any such discrimination. I have preached in Methodist Churches where same sex couples have been present in the congregation and I have always considered them to be part of the Church family.

As the members of the Methodist Church are in steep decline the percentage of members who experience serious problems in this area must be minuscule. Here again I would reiterate that there are also other human problems besides those of a sexual nature which need support and understanding.

## **2.9 Moving towards marriage**

The Task Group mentions “our theology” “we believe that the Bible” but where is the evidence for these bland statements. What is the “theology” of the Task Group? Where is the evidence in the Bible which promotes “same sex marriage?” ... because I have yet to discover reference to any Greek/Hebrew texts. I look forward to the next section where the Task Group explores the ‘developing theology of marriage.’

**My summary of this section is -**

**Welcome in the Church Yes but Marriage - No.**

## SECTION 3

### 3 God's guidance for marriage: developing our vision. (Page 93)

Well this section should make for an interesting few hours of study and research.

#### 3.1 Our developing theology of marriage

- 3.1.1** So it is in this paragraph that the Task Group describe marriage (between one man and one woman) as a particular form of a relationship... This plays an important part in enabling the partners (husband and wife/ and woman), the society of which they are part, and the human race to flourish according to God's purposes.
- 3.1.2** It is stated that questions have been raised concerning the expression used in the 1998 report that marriage is a Gift of God. It would be helpful to understand whether the concerns were raised by members of the Methodist Church and the actual number of people who raised the matter. This section is dealing with the matter of how the Methodist Church views the status of marriage. For a Christian to make a commitment for life is one of the most important decisions a person can make.
- 3.1.3** I fail to understand the relevance of this paragraph. Whether the Methodist Church in its wisdom made statements as describing marriage as something "good" or a "Gift from God" surely the words endorse the fact that marriage between a man and woman is ordained by God and this was confirmed by Jesus when he was a guest at the wedding in Cana.
- 3.1.4** I accept the findings of the Task Group of the three bullet points.
- 3.1.5** I would add the words "sacrifice" to commitment and discipline.
- 3.1.6** I would not agree that this is true of all close relationships. The Solemnisation of Matrimony is a serious affair. I refer you to the Book of Common Prayer and the necessity of Banns to be read on at least three occasions in the Parish Church before the marriage takes place. Marriage can in no way be compared with "close relationships". Just take the matter of "finance" - monies have to be shared, decisions have to be made jointly. Daily responsibilities have to be shared and agreements have to be reached. - Yes Christian marriage is a matter of "forsaking all other" - that is total commitment for the whole of one's life - that is why it is NOT TRUE to compare "close relationships" to marriage.
- 3.1.7** And so now we come to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer - Personally I cannot see how one can improve on this wording because whether the Task Group like it or not the majority of marriages between a man and woman actually produce children and are welcomed not only by the parents but by the wider family.
- I read a report today (6.3.2020) that a quarter of babies conceived in this country are aborted. I have yet to read in this report any mention about what I consider to be the "murder" of Christ's little ones. Is there any difference between offering a baby as a sacrifice to Molech?
- 3.1.8** I note the 1999 Methodist Worship Book does actually mention "children" so that must be good news.
- 3.1.9** I totally disagree - the Methodist Church may "think" the purpose of Marriage has changed significantly. The wording of the Marriage Service may have changed but the majority of people getting married will at some point in their lives desire to have children of their own. The Methodist Church cannot pontificate about the orders of priority in peoples' married lives.
- Maybe some may think upon marriage as just companionship. However, there are many factors in 2020 which influence peoples' thinking - economics, the housing market, employment, health. The Task Group has no authority to make statements without being able to give detailed evidence.
- 3.1.10** If a nation does not "procreate" it will die out - it is as simple as that. If the Task Group feel it necessary to refer to Genesis to make their point - God knew that to survive the man had to find the food for the family and the woman had to cook it and make garments... common sense if one wished to survive in a harsh environment.
- 3.1.11** Confirms that the Task Group is content with the wording of the 1999 Methodist Worship Book - Solemnisation of Matrimony.
- 3.1.12** I find this suggestion a bit ott (over the top) and I do so object to the word "partner" I am a woman married to a man and he is my husband and I am his wife.

#### 3.2 Grace Divine and human frailty

- 3.2.1** So taking into account "Liberating Sex" by Adrian Thatcher it is now being considered that marriage is patriarchal. No mention is made of "marriages of convenience" or "arranged" marriages or perhaps this comes later in the report. Do you think I included the word "obey" at my wedding service - no, I had the word omitted from the service knowing one cannot tell untruths in the presence of God!

### 3.2.2. and 3.2.3

Does it matter whether there is an imbalance of power in a marriage that is surely for the husband and wife to work out for themselves. For example one may be better at managing finances and the other enjoys cooking. Does it matter which way around it is?

Exploitation and abuse are mentioned but this is why it is so important counselling and careful preparation is undertaken before the marriage. All the potential problems which might arise need thinking through before entering the lifelong commitment.

**3.2.4** It has taken some 40 pages before I read the word "SIN" - the words from Psalm 51 v9 "Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities." and the words of 1 John 1: 8.9 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the **truth** is not in us; but if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(Book of Common Prayer).

BUT not only SIN is given mention in this paragraph but actually 'CHILDREN' but I note there is no footnote giving any evidence of the statement.

Research shows that young people who experience family breakdown are more than twice as likely to become homeless and twice as likely to be in trouble with the police. Such children are also more likely to develop emotional problems. People often believe that divorcing is better for children so they do not see the conflict between their parents. But the "Exeter Family Study" found that divorce increases rather than reduces children's exposure to conflict. After divorce, children are often at the heart of the disputes in a way they never were before. The Study compared the effects of family disruption on children in re-ordered families with those of conflict on children living in intact families. It found the poorest outcomes for children were associated with the re-ordering of the family rather than the presence of serious conflict. In other words, divorce is worse for children than serious conflict in an intact family.

### 3.2.5 and 3.2.6

The paragraph States 'the good news of the Gospel is the God's response is always? to be gracious ...'. So has God's attitude to adultery changed since the time of David and Bathsheba? 'The Methodist Church' may have changed the way it responds to divorce but I would suggest it is not universally accepted by all members of the Methodist Church.

If adultery has taken place it seems the "goodies in the jar" have run out and "love" along with them or at least for one member of the marriage. What has taken place within the marriage between a man and a woman is a private affair - it may be if it is a Christian marriage that they feel they are able to share the problems with the congregation but I feel this expecting too much especially as the matter is probably in the hands of their respective lawyers.

Personally I feel the matter should be left to the booklet (2002) which contains some useful prayers but not a service.

**3.2.7** "So, we note that the Methodist Church has developed a 'theology of marriage' which is about equality mutuality and companionship." So have I missed this "development"? The "Methodist Church", as I understand it happens to be the people who sit in the pews Sunday by Sunday and I do not think they are aware of this constant development in the 'theology of marriage'. So the "Methodist Church" is constantly "reviewing and updating our expression and practice of that vision". My understanding of marriage between one man and one woman is obviously simplistic. When did the Methodist Church receive authority to change the understanding of marriage?

How can it change? Surely it is the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others until death us do part?

So who gave the "Methodist Church" authority to change the "theology" of marriage? ... personally I think the authors of this report are taking a journey into a "make believe world" of their own or endeavouring to establish a "theory" for which there is no biblical evidence available. In other words I can find no "in depth analysis" of the re- interpretation of the Bible passages which would have gone some way to enable the Task Group to venture into uncharted waters and seek to change the Doctrine of Christian marriage.

### 3.3 Marriage as a social and legal Institution

**3.3.1** This paragraph attempts to give a "potted history" of marriage down through the ages. As to "falling into the trap" I have difficulty in determining which "trap" we are supposed to be avoiding. There are no footnotes to back up these far reaching statements.

**3.3.2** Yes "the world" may have decided to detach the civil marriage from the religious one. I would however refer you to the wording of the Register Office ceremonies which as I noted previously can now be held on a Cornish beach as long as the Registrar is prepared to accommodate the couples wishes and risk getting his/her feet wet!

I fail to understand why today's "detachment" from the religious aspect of marriage is of any concern to the



Methodist Church. Everyone is aware that either the Chapel is registered for Marriages or it is not. There has always been a legal requirement to ensure the marriage is valid under the law of the land. Surely this fact alone shows how seriously “marriage” has been taken by successive Governments.

**3.3.3** Yes, I would suggest that most people are aware of the wording in the Methodist Worship Book 1999 or have access to a copy.

**3.3.4** “but adds something special to it” - would that happen to be God the creator of the universe?

**3.3.5** I have read and re-read this statement. On page 102 the report states “We judge that the legal or civil understanding of marriage with regard to mixed sex marriages is contained within the understanding of the Methodist Church, which then goes beyond it.” Please may this statement be re-written in plain English - what exactly is it saying? ...the report then continues “Having said that, the Task Group would want to continue to afford those couples undertaking a civil marriage. “So is the task group referring to the civil partnership of a man and a woman or same sex couples?...”

I have reluctantly come to the conclusion it is better the Methodist Church decides no longer to hold wedding services on their premises.

### **3.4 Resources to support marriage**

The Government is to introduce “No Fault Divorce”

This creates two forms of injustice,.

1. The person’s spouse can simply walk away from the marriage without any justification for breaching the vows the couple made to one another And this is being applied retrospectively to existing marriages. It is redefining people’s marriages after the fact. It is no longer the definition of marriage they signed up for.
2. The second injustice arises where there is serious misconduct such as adultery. A wronged spouse will not be able to file for divorce citing this behaviour as the reason. The guilty party is not identified as being at fault. This is more than likely to leave the innocent party feeling doubly betrayed, both by the spouse and the system that does not allow bad conduct to be named.

## **SECTION 4**

### **4 Widening the practice of Marriage. (Page 103)**

I agree wholeheartedly with the first THREE LINES.

Now we come to consider the ‘developing Methodist theology of marriage and relationships’...so now that the law of the land has changed the Methodist Church may now consider ‘widening its own practice of marriage’.

#### **4.1 The question posed by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples Act) 2013**

The report states ‘As a Church, we have declared that all people are equally valued by God’. And goes on to state “now we must address the question of whether it should be possible for same-sex couples to marry in the Methodist Church’. Personally I see no correlation between ‘All people being equally valued by God’ and introducing same-sex marriage in the Methodist Church... none whatsoever.

#### **4.2 Who can register a civil partnership or be married in law?**

I would refer the Task Group to the Table of Kindred and Affinity included in the book of Common Prayer which states ‘wherein whosoever are related are forbidden in scripture and our laws to marry together’. Thirty relationships are cited. So does this “Table” included in the Book of Common Prayer apply to same sex couples?

#### **4.3 Who may register a civil partnership or be married under the discipline of the Methodist Church?**

**4.3.1** I have read and re-read this paragraph and seek clarification as to what was actually agreed at the 2014 Methodist Conference.

**4.3.2** ‘With regard to mixed-sex marriages’. No, I am not in a ‘mixed-sex marriage’. I am in a marriage as ordained by God - I am a woman married to a man’ and I live in a state of Holy Matrimony.

**4.3.3** It is therefore clear that the Methodist Conference of 2006 did not endorse the blessing of same-sex couples on Methodist premises.

**4.3.4** And so the boundaries were pushed a little further along the way indicating that prayers and services for same-sex couples could be undertaken under the guise of good pastoral practice as long it did not take place on Methodist premises.

Then in 2014 the guidance was revised - unbeknown to the general Membership of the Methodist Church public thanksgivings in respect of samesex couples who were in a Civil partnership have been taking place or are

permitted to take place on Methodist Church premises.

Perhaps you will be kind enough to advise me whether the members of the Methodist Chapels and Churches were informed of this change to the Standing Orders as it appears these 'services' can be undertaken by the appropriate minister, probationer or even a member... unbelievable.

As a Methodist Local Preacher I was certainly not aware of these changes.

**4.3.5** As I understand the wording of this paragraph it appears that in the first instance civil partnerships were not allowed to be contracted on religious premises. For this to happen it would have had to come to Conference and the Task Group, in spite of the 2010 Equality Act, is not recommending to Conference that these contracts should take place on Methodist premises.

**4.3.6** The Conference has authorised forms of service solemnising the marriages of a man and a woman in Methodist Chapels which are registered.

**4.3.7** This paragraph confirms that Conference has not authorised Trustees of Methodist Chapels to apply for authorisation that same sex marriages take place on Methodist premises.

**4.3.8** So I am not sure that I have understood para. 4.3.7 because now I read that the Methodist Church is 'content for Methodists whether lay or ordained to enter the legal institutions of same-sex partnership and same-sex marriage but does not see them as falling within the Methodist Church's understanding of marriage.'

"Some members' are apparently in favour of same sex marriages being held on Methodist premises but others do not want this relationship to be called 'marriage'. I then read in the footnote about Appendix 5 of the 2016 Report concerning "District consultations" - well the consultation did not appear to reach Cornwall!

And then there are members who do not wish to see any formalised samesex relationship.

**4.3.9** I despair when I consider the content of this paragraph.

As an elected councillor I have the privilege of speaking to people on their doorsteps. These people are hard working ordinary people who are aware of what is happening in the world. They are aware of the principles I stand for and often confide in me "This isn't right Mrs. Carlyon - what is the Methodist Church thinking about?" I am referring to the 'man/woman in the street'. The people outside the church are looking to us the Methodist Church to "hold the line" and they consider that they are being let down.

So let us analyse the content of this statement.

First of all I would question "a basic reason often given for this opposition is that anything other than sexual relationship between a man and a woman is said to be not natural" The Task Group gives no evidence for being able to make this statement... therefore it is no more than a generalisation.

Furthermore the Task Group has the audacity to tell the members of the congregations that it is 'due to dislike or fear of habits and practices that are not our own' - well that does not help the situation... here again there is no tangible evidence for such a statement.

"Yet what is declared to be 'natural' and what is not is often what is in accord with judgement and self interest of the powerful'. With respect I would suggest that those of us who have lived our lives to the best of our ability in accordance with the inerrant Word of God, realise this is the only way to live a healthy uncomplicated life. John Bunyan's book - Pilgrims Progress reminds us all about the "narrow way".

What exactly has the apparent "same sex activity" discerned among some animals to do with human beings who have been created in the likeness of God? I have farmed most of my life and would be interested to learn the source of this information because again I see no footnote backing up the statement.

It is now evident that the Task Group considers any members of the Methodist Church who do not agree with the recommendations being placed before the 2020 Methodist Conference are considered to be homophobic and bigoted. I consider this paragraph to be divisive and lacking in grace.

**4.3.10** We now consider the morality of the recommendations before Conference. Here we turn to the Bible and Matthew Chapter 5:2.2. However, I would refer the Task Group to Matthew 15:19 where Jesus said 'out of the heart comes evil thoughts' He then goes on to separate adultery (moixaii) from fornication (porneiai). In Deuteronomy 23:17 we have seen that fornicator refers to a male engaging in the sexual act with another male.

So as the Revd. Knowles-Berry states in her Bible study "Was Jesus including the homosexual act under the general heading of fornication? It is possible, since He would know Deuteronomy 23:17 from both the Hebrew and the Greek Sept. the latter being the version of His day and is nowhere recorded that Jesus contradicted the Scriptural references to the homosexual act."

The final sentence states 'It can be argued that it is no less moral to see that fulfilled in same-sex relationships as in mixed-sex ones" well that happens to be a matter of opinion.

**4.3.11** So now we come to the Word of God and the Task Group admit there has been opposition to the Re-definition of Marriage on the basis of scripture. Six texts have been selected from the Bible which are discussed and analysed in 4.3.12

**4.3.12** It states' the following texts have been much discussed and fiercely debated....'

So we turn to **Genesis 19:1-29 and Judges 19:1-30.**

I have my Bible open in front of me and I turn to the above passage from Genesis. However, if this passage is to be read in context the passage chosen should commence at Genesis Chapter 18 Abraham pleads for Sodom. In verse 20 "Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me, if not I will know." No mention is made by the Task Group about the "sin so grievous". All this was happening **before** the arrival of the two men (angels) in Sodom. What would be grieving God if it was not homosexual behaviour and idolatry. The footnote in the Study Bible (NIV) under 19.5 reads "'have sex with them". Homosexuality was so characteristic of the men of Sodom (see Jude v.7) that it is often called 'sodomy.' I can find no mention of the people of Sodom not offering hospitality. Here again I would refer to the Bible Study by the Revd. Knowles-Berry, pages 4-6.

In Judges 19 it cannot be ignored that the wrong doing were men desiring to have 'knowledge' of another man. If the Task Group disagrees why is the original Hebrew text not shown in order that those reading the report may then research an accurate translation for themselves?

**Leviticus Chapter 18:22 and 20:13**

I have read the whole of both Chapters 18 and 19 - The headings I have in my Bible are Unlawful Sexual Relations and Punishments for sin respectively. I would suggest that in both chapters there is a pretty comprehensive list. No, I would suggest that it is not to our advantage to pick and choose.

So as a grower of flax since 1983, processing it by hand and weaving it into linen, I can explain exactly why wool and linen are not mixed together.

Hopefully the members of the Task Group will be aware that linen is the most pure of fabrics having its origin in the stem of the flax plant. In Leviticus Chapter 16 the Lord prescribes how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments..."

It is well known that linen has healing properties for the skin and a garment made of linen is especially beneficial in hot weather. To add wool fibre from a sheep or a goat to the weave would mean the benefits of the linen would be lost, added to which when washed in hot water the shrinkage % differs from one fibre to another.

And so the Task Group refers the reader to **Matthew 15:10-11 and 17-20**

I find it difficult to understand the train of thought. Chapter 15 is headed Clean and Unclean - I can see no reference to 'holiness' in these verses.

What I read are the words 'For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'. As adultery is already listed perhaps the Task Group would care to define the words 'sexual immorality'.

The report then has the audacity to interpret these words 'as what is being done is done to love God and love one's neighbour'. I fail to understand the relevance of this sentence to the above texts.

And so we move on to the third bullet point and references to **1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10.**

I would suggest that Bible reading Christians are extremely clear about the list. Paul identifies three kinds of sexually immoral person; adulterers, male prostitutes and males who practise homosexuality. It could not be much clearer. So as the Task Group does not find it possible to generalise with confidence from the terms used - I would suggest you have a further look at the original Hebrew and at the same time - have a look at the word "thieves" do they still exist or perhaps a modern 'thief' one who uses the office printer with its paper and printer inks for some personal use but no doubt this is now interpreted as "unstructured borrowing".

Moving on to **1 Timothy v.9-10**

Here again in these verses we have a list of activities which need to be avoided. I am still unable to find any mention of 'loving' same-sex acts.

**Romans 1:26-27**

Here again why are the previous verses ignored? **v.24** Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the TRUTH for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is for ever praised! Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts.

The report states the passage is about idolatry - yes, but what about v.24 "sinful desires of their hearts"? the report continues *"Paul "may be thinking..." "He may be assuming...""*

But to me the most important words are found in **verse 24** - 'Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged TRUTH about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen'

Paul has three great thoughts about TRUTH, one of which connects it with God, a second with the gospel, and a third with the Christian way of life.

And again in Ephesians 4:19 'They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practise every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learn Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as TRUTH is in Jesus.....'

And so we arrive at **Romans Chapter 1 v 26-27** - these verses are, in my opinion, crucial to the contemporary debate about 'same sex marriage' which are being challenged and have been challenged for many years by the 'gay lobby' and more recently by the LGBT lobby.

I leave this debate to the theologians for me the words of Jesus are sufficient 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female", and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let no one separate.'(Matthew 19:4) So whatever the Methodist Conference decides about "good relating" between two people of the same sex, it cannot in any way be considered "marriage" as defined in the Bible.

The Methodist Church will then be adopting Doctrine which is contrary to scripture and expect Ordained Ministers, Local Preachers and faithful congregations to accept this change.

The Report then gives a list of texts which have been considered by the Task Group.

I fail to understand how any of these texts have any relevance to Same Sex Marriage.

#### **4.3.14** The report states the texts are not exhaustive.

It would have been most helpful if the Task Group had published detailed exegesis on each of the texts given on **page 109 (Conference Report)** examining the original Hebrew/Greek texts and published informed theological views from **both sides of the argument**. So far I have found the **report to be entirely biased in favour of the re-definition of marriage which was not something I expected**. In Local Government there is usually a table of "Risks" published in order to facilitate an informed decision. Seemingly this is not the case within the Methodist Church.

#### **4.3.15** This paragraph appears to be informing the readers that scholarly debate, to which I was referring above, is moving away from arguments about the precise meaning and implications of terms in particular texts but are now listening to "the whole range of voices that make up the Bible" and yet seemingly in contradiction it states the Task Group is in constant engagement with the Scriptures?? ...so to which "voices" are the Task Group members listening?

Personally, I would suggest that God might well have already turned His back on this country and left us to our own devices until we come to our senses and turn back to Him in repentance.

#### **4.3.16** What other Book is available in order that, 'Bible-reading Christians' may turn in order to discern the will of a faithful of God? Well, "The Golden Grove" by Jeremy Taylor was in use by many a family, Wesley's own edition of 'The Imitation of Christ' published courageously in 1735 was considered to be a blessing to countless souls and the "Collection of hymns for the use of people called Methodists" edited by John Wesley and forming as he said "a little body of spiritual and practical divinity" for the greater part consisting of Charles Wesley's hymns and first published in 1780.

The report states 'The Scriptures themselves are full of examples of texts that were at one time granted great status or privilege, but which later declared to be of much less importance than other parts of the Bible' but **NO EXAMPLES ARE GIVEN OF SUCH TEXTS**. ...only the selected ones about marriage and relationships in the Old Testament are given.

As to levirate marriage maybe this was the only way to keep the widow from poverty... one easily forgets that there was no government/taxpayer to provide benefits! Let us remember, however, Jesus affirmed Genesis Chapter 2 v.24.

#### **4.3.17** I look forward to reading "Created in God's image" which apparently suggests that we should not limit our ideas of what God might do. However, God has not, as yet, decided to change our anatomy although man is doing his best to do so. Meanwhile the Bible makes it quite clear marriage is ordained to be between one man and one woman. ...moving away from this invariably causes physical problems and in many cases serious diseases which are well documented.

**4.3.18** The objection to same-sex marriage is well founded - the same-sex couple cannot naturally procreate. This is a statement of fact.

The Methodist Church may have changed its emphasis on Christian marriage to companionship rather than procreation but I would suggest there are few couples of child bearing age who do not wish to have a child of their own.

As to conducting marriages for older couples I would suggest in all probability they have both reared children in their previous marriage and no doubt have arrived at a time of life when they will enjoy the company of their children and one another. I cannot see the need for "reassessment" ...this is surely making a 'mountain out of a mole hill'?

As I read further into this report it becomes like Alice in Wonderland - stranger and stranger. The Methodist Church/the Task Group are on a journey developing theology of relationships and marriage and the Task Group is "rejoicing in self-giving love wherever it can be found" - so let us have a definition of this 'self-giving love' and how this relates to "same-sex marriage" taking place on our Methodist premises.

**4.3.19** So we have a "companionship" model of marriage developed by the Methodist Church. ...far removed from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Yet again the report refers to "mixed-sex relationships" - I am offended by the use of this expression. There is already provision for 'same-sex marriage' in most parts of the UK and the Church was promised that they never need become involved. However, the Methodist Church has chosen to become involved, causing untold grief and anxiety to many of its faithful members. It is difficult to understand why such a decision has been made at a time when membership is in steep decline especially when fewer couples wish to marry in a Methodist Church. I wish to re-iterate the fact, call it what you may, biological marriage between same-sex couples and heterosexual couples cannot and never will be the same. Over the passage of time heterosexual couples who have children to bring up will become second class families.

Parents have little time for the so called "companionship" but are striving and working to pay the mortgage, looking after the children, cooking the meals, attending parent evenings at the school - washing football kit. Have the members of the Task Group forgotten what life was like or didn't you ever experience it?

**4.3.20** So it is with "awe and humility" that the Methodist Church is being called by God. The Methodist Church wrote its first report on Human Sexuality way back in 1979 when as a member of the Cornwall Community Standards Associations Committee we made a response (see Appendix 2) - so it has been a long journey, during which the membership numbers in the Methodist Church in the UK have dropped dramatically and so, in my opinion, has the quality and content of the preaching the Gospel of Christ.

I have read quite widely and understand the longing some same-sex couples may have for a Christian marriage. Sadly, I am not convinced that God really wants this to happen as I am unable to find either in the Old Testament scriptures or the New Testament scriptures any encouragement or acceptance of these kind of relationships within the Christian Church or in fact within Judaism. However, **as a Bible believing Christian I do not have the luxury of being able to have my own opinion.**

**4.3.21** Strange that the Task Group is responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit because as I study and write this response night after night, I too feel I am responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit - so we find ourselves in somewhat of a dilemma! This is especially evident when this paragraph states "We believe in taking this step, the Methodist Church will be being both scriptural and faithful". Methinks the Methodist Church could do well to think again because as yet I am unable to understand how it has arrived at being able to make this statement in the first instance.

Reading on in the report it further states "The faithfulness of those of us who base our theology on those interpretations will also have to be respected and honoured ..."

If the Methodist Church redefines marriage, what is to stop 'marriage' being redefined yet again? I suggest that this is just the beginning of the so called 'emerging theology of marriage' as understood by the Task Group and supporters. **The key is in the lock... the door is opening.**

If marriage is solely about love and commitment between two consenting adults what's to say we shouldn't recognise three way relationships ...polygamy and what is now known as "throupling"? If two men can marry one another, why not three? Or why not two men and a woman? What is so special about the number 'two' once it's no longer about a man and a woman coming together?

If marriage is just about 'love' between consenting adults, and does not take into account what is best for children, then why not recognise the love between three people or more?

It is quite clear to me that once the Methodist Church in the UK agree the recommendations contained within the report the 'emerging theology of marriage', as referred to more than once, is obviously going to push the door open to accept 'polygamy' and then who knows? ... it may not be immediately but in the fullness of time.



Why do I say it is 'quite clear to me?' because no serious attention has seemingly been given in this report to the health and welfare of children and surely this is a most serious omission.

**It is now becoming clear due to the recommendations laid before the 2019 Conference it will now be necessary for many Bible texts to be accepted as being 'reinterpreted' and the Methodist Doctrine changed accordingly, to enable same-sex couples to be "married" which will inturn, prevent those of us who disagree with the recommendations, affirming our agreement with the new agreed Methodist Doctrine, leaving us with no option but to stand down from preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ within the Methodist Church.**

The Methodist Church may feel they should accommodate the needs of the world around them but this is a step too far for many people both those inside the Church and those outside.

It is good to remind ourselves of the words of St. Paul in Romans 12.2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..."

Matrimonial law has never fundamentally altered the essential nature of marriage; a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Same sex marriage rewrites hundreds of years of British legal tradition and at least a thousands of years of cultural heritage.

Our attention is then drawn to **Romans Chapter 14:1-15.7.**

Having studied commentaries on these verses together with those of 1 Corinthians Chapter 8, Paul is talking about the "weak" and the "strong" but he never explains in detail exactly who they were.

I am therefore assuming that those who oppose the recommendations are considered to be the "weak" in this context and those who are "strong" the Methodist Conference! Nonetheless Paul is not writing about same-sex marriage he is seemingly writing about "food" and/or the community in Rome.

I found John Stott's commentary on 'The Message to the Romans' very helpful in respect of Romans 1 and 14.

## SECTION 5

### 5 Next Steps for the Methodist Church (Page 112)

Here follows further information concerning "our developing theology of relationships and marriage and what it will mean in practice for the Methodist Church."

#### 5.1 Guidance and understanding of marriage

Here it is explained that the Standing Orders and other material in the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD) are not just definitions and rules but also express theological principles and descriptions. So my question to the Task Group is whether the CPD in this respect includes rules as well as theology? I have read note 166 three times and am no wiser.

#### 5.1.2 According to the 'developing theology' new wording under the Guidance Section in CPD.

**G1** "The Methodist Church welcomes EVERYONE who enquires about an intended marriage in any of its places of worship." Surely this is a very unfortunate statement - and there is no necessity even for them to believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died upon the Cross that our sins may be forgiven? ...just merely an "openness to God".

**G2** We read that legally 'marriage' is a contractual relationship entered into by two people. So if the law of the land changes to "three people" which may well be polygamy and throupling - will "the developing theology of the Methodist Church" decide we must accommodate this because God is within every loving relationship?

I find it difficult to comprehend how, just because the Methodist Church believes it is a covenant relationship between two people, within God's covenant of love with them, couples who are not Christians will have any idea what the Methodist Church is talking about... in my opinion this is just another false premise - meaningless words to a couple who have not committed themselves to the Christian faith and the Church will probably never see them again.

**G3** As yet the Guidance has not made it clear whether it is referring to the accepted marriage between one man and one woman or whether it can be same-sex couples except that there is a strange sentence which reads "*with a lifelong intention of uniting two people in body, heart, mind and soul in ways that are appropriate to each partner*"? THEN it goes on to say "*Through such marriage children may be nurtured, family life strengthened and human society enriched.*"! So to which kind of marriage is the statement referring?

**G4** Apparently amongst the members of the Methodist Church it is accepted there are different views about the

interpretation of the Bible on the matter of whether marriage is between a man and a woman or “any two people”! So everyone is to be accommodated.

**G5** Reiterates the legal position of marriage

**G6** And so without saying so the Guidance is placing the responsibility of whether a marriage can take place on their Chapel premises on to the managing trustees of the Chapel. I consider it far better NO marriages take place on Methodist premises should these recommendations be accepted by the 2020 Conference. Returning to the statement in G1 when the couples requesting marriage are not even expected to be members of the congregation, I find it no more than a divisive action on the part of the Task Group to suggest such wording. Congregations will, in the most part, be divided upon the matter should it be a “same-sex” couple, the Minister’s view may be entirely at odds with that of the congregation and yet the managing trustees are in the middle of all this.

I am weary of ‘lectures’ on this subject and being told it is entirely down to the local congregations. The local congregations are only too aware of the ramifications of saying “No” to a same-sex couple. Here in Cornwall we know how a Christian family was treated, their livelihood destroyed because of their Christian beliefs. We are also aware of the dreadful years endured by the Christian family in Northern Ireland and others who have lost their employment. ...and yet because of or in spite of this the Task Group set up by the Methodist Church is throwing everyone into what I consider to be unnecessary distress.

**So the question arises will the Methodist Conference provide indemnities for Local Preachers, Worship Leaders and Ministers if a legal case is taken out against them for preaching the Word of God as set out in the King James Version of the Bible?**

**G7** Deals with compliance

**5.2** Amended Standing Order concerning Marriage

**011A** I would respectfully suggest that the Methodist Church is being economical with the truth in the proposed wording.

It does not state that same-sex couples are now to be included and apparently neither do the couples to be married require to be Christians or members of the Methodist Church.

**5.3** Respect for differing convictions

**5.3.1** Here the Task Group acknowledges that there are likely to be “differing convictions”.

**5.3.2** Mention is now made of the remarriage of divorcees where the Minister has to make the decision.

**5.3.3** I have re-read this statement a number of times. Does this mean that if a couple request not to be married by a certain Minister on the grounds of gender or race the couple have to abide by the rules of the Methodist Church? I feel there is a need for clarification on this paragraph for the lay person.

**5.3.4** It states “in no circumstances would a minister be forced to conduct a same-sex marriage but they would...” But what concerns me is not so much the present but the future. If someone sought ordination under the new proposed rules, would the Methodist Church still honour the conscience clause or expect them to comply with marrying same-sex couples and if not would they be rejected?

**5.3.5** It is refreshing to read that the 2014 Working Party on marriage realised the problems of introducing same-sex marriage on local congregations.

I reiterate, I have never known of a problem with people who consider themselves to be either homosexual or lesbian not being welcomed as part of the congregation/Church family but the Methodist Church will have to come to terms with a “falling away” of membership, which it can ill afford either in numbers or monetary contributions, IF it forges ahead with considering that same-sex marriage is on a par/equal with marriage between one man and one woman, it will be Conference who will have to face up to these problems in due course.

**5.3.6** It is helpful that the ‘Methodist Church’ is considering the possibility of how we live together in the future with contradictory practices between different Churches in the Connexion.

**5.3.7** This section confirms that the existing guidance on marriages between one man and one woman will remain unaltered. The Churches would therefore have the opportunity to opt in or to opt out. This suggests that Ministers will have the same provision with the proviso that same-sex couples are referred to the nearest church who are registered to undertake the ceremony.

**5.3.8** Here protection is offered for differing convictions concerning who may be married in a Methodist Church under a new Standing Order 011B together with provisions for the protection of ‘conscience’ concerning divorce and remarriage found in Standing Order 011A. (Further details Resolution 9)

**011B** Divorce, Remarriage, Same-sex Marriage and Respect for Conscience.

1. Here we have the wording of the Standing Order which states that 'Divorce in a court of the land, and matters of sex or gender, do not of themselves prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship.' What is this really saying? It says to me as a lay person that there is nothing to prevent me from being re-married, whether I be divorced or a same-sex couple wishing to be married, in any Methodist Church. So could I not demand, therefore, to be married in a Chapel of my choice? If I was denied that choice then could I not take legal action against the Methodist Church? Maybe I have misunderstood the wording but I propose that (1) be deleted in light of the statement which follows in section (2)

2 and 3

Both these conscience clauses are welcome and probably workable if clause (1) were deleted.

4 I trust this clause will be re-written to clarify the position.

#### **5.4 Steps to support marriage and other significant relationships**

As I understand it Civil Partnerships have the same rights and privileges as a married couple. So unless it is referring to existing members of the congregation I can see no benefit in a further "Blessing of a Marriage" just because it would 'open the occasion up to the grace of God through thanksgiving and to the blessing of God as we have outlined it'. I fail to see the need for any change unless the couple were committed Christians.

**5.4.2** The report refers back to **3.2.6** where it recommends that liturgical texts be produced at the ending of a marriage. Has anyone ever requested such a service? I really am beginning to wonder whether the members of the Task Group have really thought this through. ...Or was it just a 'nice' idea? Maybe a private service but the thought of a public service. ...See response to 3.2.6.

**5.4.3** Here we have a request from the Task Group to up date the present resources in respect of guidance for Marriage, parenting suggesting that the work be undertaken ecumenically. ***I trust the contents will come before our Synods for approval before it is published.***

**5.4.4** I look forward to reading the material produced by the EDI committee which enables development in the understanding of sexuality and gender be further promoted and used around the Connexion (EDI Toolkit modules 6.7.1 and 7.2. Is it intended this information be used within our Sunday Schools as well our Youth Groups?

I read that this refers to a Notice of Motion 2018/204 Trans Stakeholder Group. Daily Record No. 7/17/9.

**5.4.5** It seems this statement refers to Notice of Motion 2018/203 (2018 Conference) concerning living together with contradictory convictions and emerging practice...? So may I be so bold as to enquire what exactly the Task Group has in mind when it states "We simply note that reference here for future inclusion in work undertaken on these matters". As this implies that the report before us merely an **Interim report** and there is more to come!

## **RESOLUTIONS**

AND SO NOW WE HAVE ARRIVED AT THE RESOLUTIONS (**page 121 Conference Report 2019**) <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/marriage-and-relationships-2019/the-2019-marriage-and-relationships-report/>

The words of Romans Chapter 1 resonate in my head "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth" ...and all the verses that follow. Together with the Letter of Jude.

**10/1** The Conference receives the Report and commends it to the Connexion for study and prayerful discussion.

**10/2** The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.2.5 that it affirm the following summary understanding of the principles or qualities of **good relating**:

Here follows a list of all the attributes expected in a 'significant relationship' - Followed by a homily on self-giving rather than through self-seeking that the self flourishes and begins to experience life in all its fullness. Here we have no mention of the involvement of God in a 'significant relationship' only that the Church's historic emphasis on self-sacrifice has often been misused (e.g. by abusive partners) ...So exactly what is the point of 10/2? There is nothing apparent in these statements that Marriage is a Sacrament or anything other than what might be said by a Registrar. Or have I missed the point and the Task Group is not referring to marriage but rather "good relating" and "significant relationships" which the Methodist Church is now seemingly prepared to accept rather than Marriage itself?

**10/3** The Conference adopts the recommendation in paragraph 2.6.4. that it affirm the following summary understanding of cohabitation:

The following three statements are an entirely new concept to me and it would be helpful to understand exactly who in the "Church" recognises that the love of God is present within the love of human beings who are drawn

together, who has decided to 'celebrate' that the love of God is present even if that grace is not responded to or even discerned by the people concerned and finally the "Church is going to encourage everyone to deepen their commitment?"

So these are the stated reasons why the Methodist Church is now condoning and seemingly encouraging 'Cohabitation'.

What in fact the Methodist Church is doing in reality is giving approval to a family structure that is fundamentally more unstable than marriage. It is sending a clear message that there is no need to make a formal commitment.

Yet no consideration has been given to the children of such a union because statistics show that a less formal commitment results in more family breakdown. **But then children do not feature in this report.**

Then follows the recommendations **10/4 - 10/5 - 10/6** which ensure that Methodist Council in consultation with the Faith and Order Committee produce wording to be used for the "Celebration of Civil Partnerships".

I am not sure whether this has been made clear earlier in the report. Is this referring to same-sex couples who are already in a Civil Partnership or heterosexual couples now living within a Civil Partnership. So does this refer to the "marriage" of same-sex couples or rather a 'Blessing' as is at present available for couples who have re-married?

**10/5** See my notes on **3.2.6** and **5.4.2** - I note in this instance Conference 'directs' the Faith and Order Committee to produce liturgical resources and relevant guidance for use at the ending of a marriage.

**10/6** This recommendation is obviously referring to giving support to same-sex marriage and traditional marriage between one man and one woman and also to "**other committed relationships**". Here again CONFERENCE DIRECTS THE METHODIST COUNCIL to ensure **resources** are produced to help provide this support drawing on the 'theological insights' of the purposes, qualities and patterns for 'good relating'. So re-reading this recommendation it would appear that the 'liberal' interpretation of the Bible and the so called '**theological insights**' are to be incorporated into the written word as "**resources**".

These '**resources**' will inevitably be published by the Methodist Publishing House and will be available as the new Doctrine of the Methodist Church concerning 'marriage' and Cohabitation. **May I be assured that the wording of these new resources will become available to District Synods for approval BEFORE they are published?**

It is at this point I have become convinced that the Methodist Church has been 'infiltrated' to a point where it will disintegrate should these recommendations not be withdrawn, because I consider what has been written in this report is not the 'truth' as found in the Bible. I exhort those who wish to follow these recommendations to diligently examine themselves and return to the Word of God. The Methodist Church has strayed so far from its Wesleyan foundations that it is scarcely recognisable today. I can see little in this report which will lead one to a life of 'holiness' and without 'holiness' no one shall see God.

**10/7** The Conference adopts the Guidance on the Understanding of Marriage set out in paragraph 5.1.2 and directs that it shall be included in the Guidance section of CPD.

I have made my comments on G1 to G7 under paragraph 5.1.2. page.

**10/8** Appears to deal with the legal aspect of marriage on Methodist premises and the re-registration of buildings to enable same-sex marriages to take place. The following extract is taken from page 123 of the Conference report 2019 and it clearly shows how the Doctrine of the Methodist Church will change should the recommendations before Conference 2020 be adopted. *I understand the light print to be the existing Standing Orders and the dark print highlights the new wording of the proposed Standing Orders.*

So to prevent any confusion arising I have **copied** the proposed changes to Standing Orders in my response.

**10/9 The Conference amends Standing Orders as follows:**

#### **011A Marriage**

1. The Methodist Church believes that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be **is given by God to be a particular channel of God's grace, and that it is in accord with God's purpose when a marriage is** a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of ~~one man and one woman~~ **two people who freely enter it.**
2. The Methodist Church welcomes everyone whether not to a member, who enquires about intended marriage in any of its places of worship.

#### **011B Divorce, Remarriage, Same-sex Marriage and Respect for Conscience.**

1. Divorce ~~does not of itself in a court of the land, and matters of sex or gender, do not of themselves~~ prevent a person being married in any Methodist place of worship...
2. Under no circumstances does the Conference require any person ~~authorised to conduct marriages~~ who

is subject to the discipline of the Church as a minister, probationer, **officer** or member to officiate at **or participate** in the marriage of a particular couple, should it be contrary to the dictates of his or her conscience to do so.

3. A minister, probationer or member who is duly authorised to conduct marriages but who for reasons of conscience will never officiate at the marriages of couples in particular circumstances, shall refer such couples to an authorised colleague who is not so prevented. **A couple who seek to be married in Methodist premises that are not appropriately registered for such purposes shall be referred to the persons responsible for the conduct of marriages at ones that are so registered preferably in the same Circuit.**
4. The Methodist Church opposes discrimination on the basis of **sexuality**, gender or race. Accordingly, if a couple is seeking to be married in a Methodist place of worship no objection to the performance by a particular minister probationer or member of any duty in respect of their proposed marriage shall be entertained on such a group. No minister, probationer or member shall perform the relevant duty or duties in place of the other person concerned or otherwise assist the couple to make the objection effective.

**10/10** The Conference directs that Resolutions 10/2. 10/3. 10/7, 10/8 and 10/9 above be treated as Provisional Resolutions under Standing Order 122.

## Summary

I have now come to the end of my response to the Report submitted by the Task Group as presented to the 2019 Conference.

### **Consultation with Methodist congregations in Cornwall.**

Recommendations 10/7 to 10/9 have been placed before some Chapel congregations for their consideration and response.

Personally I have found it difficult to fully comprehend the implications of the wording as set out in the Report/ recommendations and many members of the local congregations felt likewise and left their responses blank for this reason.

The **consultation meetings I attended in Cornwall** majored on whether local Chapels were required to hold same-sex marriages on their premises which in my opinion just created a smoke-screen.

**I have heard no impassioned pleas to keep the status quo** from the ordained ministers taking these meetings, warning of the consequences of the reinterpretation of many Bible texts or the expected effect these changes will have on society at large, condoning Cohabitation and accommodating same-sex marriages, which in turn lessens the status of Holy Matrimony between one man and one woman.

### **But it goes deeper than this - much deeper**

As stated earlier in the report these recommendations will split the Methodist Church in the UK at a time when numbers are being depleted due to 'falling away' and age.

These days there is seldom 'fire' in the preaching and the longing for another 'revival' seems a lost dream.

Political correctness has taken over the pulpit and a 'social religion' appears to be the order of the day. All we seem to be left with are sermons on the Prodigal Son and the Sower and the Seed... And so a few words on Cornish Methodism - John Wesley visited Cornwall 32 times between 1743 and 1789. Over the years visits of John and Charles Wesley and Nelson to Cornwall changed the lives of thousands of people and brought them out of extreme poverty into a community of God loving people. The visitation of the Holy Spirit in areas of Cornwall in and around 1850-60's saw thousands of conversions, peoples lives were changed beyond recognition and hundreds of Chapels were built - some of them huge Chapels to accommodate the growing congregations. These buildings were built with the 'pence' of our Methodist ancestors.

And so as I approach the close of my life I have now only memories of the St. Mary's Chapel in Truro, built in 1831 - fifty years before the Cathedral - being filled to capacity with standing room only at the annual visit of the President of Methodist Conference. ...and O the singing ...the singing ...something I shall never hear again this side of heaven.

Weekly attendance at Chapel, Sunday school and later at Fellowship filled our lives and set us on the path for life. Devoted Sunday School teachers and leaders gave up their time to help and guide the young people and prepare them for public service in the community.

And so you will understand the sadness I feel when I read the Report "God in Love Unites Us." Now a Methodist Church far removed from the one I knew and loved - a Church where Bible truths were taught at an early age which in turn nurtured us as we grew up to be responsible adults in our communities thinking of others before ourselves and putting God first in our lives.



# Recomemndations

Before coming to the following conclusions I have given careful consideration to future implications on the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom should the present recommendations be accepted by Conference.

1. It is my considered opinion that the Task Group report lacks scholarly and in depth exegesis of Biblical texts. I see no reference to the original Hebrew/Greek translations. In fact I consider it to be a 'light weight' report on an extremely serious issue with no in depth analysis as to how the members of the Task Group arrived at their far reaching recommendations.
2. I also consider the report to be biased. This is evidenced by the organisations invited to contribute to the content of the report. It could well be the recommendations were agreed and then in the remaining 60 pages were written to justify the proposed changes to the Methodist Doctrine.
3. I make no apology in suggesting the Task Group have seemingly set out to divide the membership of the Methodist Church. Whatever the motives, we are all aware that membership of the Methodist Church is already in steep decline in this country and by implementing the recommendations as written in the report we can expect this decline to be expedited. However, with the decline in membership there will inevitably be a decline in assessment contributions and legacies. The closure of the majority of rural chapels will inevitably follow.
4. One of the most serious aspects of this report is the re-interpretation of the Bible which will be a necessary in order to change to the Doctrine of the Methodist Church. It is obvious, as mentioned in the text above, many of the writings by St. Paul will now be deleted or have to be avoided as will the Letter of Jude. Much of St. John will be discarded as it concerns the truth (John 8) - not forgetting parts of the Old Testament of Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.
5. After serious consideration I have decided there needs to be a fresh approach. Due to the Covid:19 outbreak and the Government edict I understand there has been an undertaking the report God in Love Unites Us will not be discussed until the 2021 Conference.

With this in mind I propose the following action:-

**The present Task Group be thanked for the time spent on compiling the present report but that it is replaced by a new report to be compiled by a democratically elected committee with an entirely new membership.**

**It should be convened on the lines of a Select Committee with membership equally balanced between those who hold to the Wesleyan doctrine and those who hold more liberal views. Witnesses agreed by the Committee are called to give evidence before the Committee.**

**A report is then to be written which is worthy of the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom.**

**The reason for my proposal is to find a future and a way forward for the Methodist Church in this country keeping to our Wesleyan roots to avoid schisms and divisions within our Chapels and Churches - always remembering that to the vast majority of people in this country 'marriage' is still considered to be between one man and one woman.**

## So I challenge the Task Group

On whose authority does the Methodist Church UK feel able to Redefine Marriage?

Where is the evidence of your scholarly exegesis of scripture?

Where is your professional approach which should be highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages of such a radical change in Doctrine?

Where is your 'fire' and your longing to win souls for Christ?

I read none of this but just another example of 'modernism'. Samuel Chadwick who was President of the Methodist Conference 100 years ago warned us of this. These are words taken from his Presidential address "The Church has been judged, it has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. What we want is a revival of religion. Until you have got a gospel that works - be quiet. This is not an age for twiddling your thumbs..."

In his leaving sermon at Oxford place he asserted "There is no other gospel, there is no other Saviour. But if you reject this Gospel of Jesus Christ you will be lost, you will be damned and that for ever."

And so I conclude with a quotation from John Wesley towards the end of his life - 'here I am; I and my bible. I will not, I dare not, vary from this book either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible Christian, not almost but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this or not at all ...'

I pray the Methodist Conference take heed of these words.

Armored Carlyon, Truro



At the opening of a Morning Market and sale of work for Church funds and missions inn St. Mary's Wesley Hall, Truro on Friday. Left to right: Mrs Bartle Symons (secretary), Miss Laura Smith (president), Mrs. Michael Bickford-Smith (who opened the sale), the Rev. O. Kirkby Evans (circuit superintendent), the Rev. F. H. Pritchard (Chairman of Cornwall Methodist District), and the Rev. W. E. Edmundson. In front is Armored Collett, who presented a bouquet to Mrs. Bickford-Smith.

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## Appendix 1

### John Harris - Cornish Miner, Poet and Preacher 1820-1884 on Back Cover

## Appendix 2

### Cornwall Community Standards Associations Committee

#### FAITH AND ORDER COMMITTEE - "A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY" 1979

1. Were the general ideas contained in the Preamble of this report to be accepted by the Methodist Church, it would be logical later to accept it all.
2. Were the recommendations in Section C to be accepted, they would set sodomy on a par with sexual intercourse within marriage.
3. The arguments and recommendations of the report raise most serious issues. Some of these are:-
  - (a) How is it possible for a responsible committee comprised of those who claim by their very name to be followers of Wesley, to assume a stance which the average adult knows to be wrong, whether he has received traditional Christian teaching or not?
  - (b) What is the motivation of the authors of the report which, when examined in detail is quickly seen to be intellectually dishonest, or at best entirely muddled?
  - (c) How extensive is the damage done to the Methodist Church itself, and to Christian churches in general, by such a defection from elementary moral teaching?
  - (d) What would remain of the authority of the Methodist Church were such a report to be approved?
  - (e) What are the effects on young people of learning that official organs of the Christian Church are surrendering to current sexual attitudes?
4. The values in the report are those which are at present being thrust in various ways and through various channels upon Western Society, by well organised minority lobbies who argue that providing both parties enjoy the sexual act and are 'responsible', nothing else matters.
5. The report sets out to override what to all Bible students and every section of the Christian Church has hitherto been accepted teaching on the wrongness of the homosexual act, and does so under a cloak of piety and loving concern for the homosexual.
6. No reference is made anywhere to the physical damage caused to the organs of the human body by sodomy or to the fact that infection readily occurs, or to the frustrations of the practice of homosexuality.
7. In order to make the recommendations which they do, the compilers must first destroy the authority of all past Bible and traditional church teaching. No less than a complete turn round is necessary. They set to work on this in the first paragraph when they warn against surrendering to "archaic concepts on the one hand" or "to fashionable trends" on the other (Preamble) (a). There are rather few fashionable trends to which the report does not in fact surrender, although rape and incest are described as "normally unacceptable" (B12).
8. The report replaces faith in the scriptures (which is the foundation of Christian doctrine and the source of recovery of faith in every period of Christian revival), by the deprecating statement that "it is hard to say what the biblical view (of human sexuality) is" (A7), "the church has the responsibility of interpreting the Bible in every generation" (A7). However, the report makes no attempt to quote any relevant passages and to interpret them. Why not?
9. The report promotes other "Christian sources of guidance" to stand and share the (demoted) Biblical and traditional judgments about sexuality. Reason is to be one (A8). The report has nothing clear to say about that. The Holy Spirit is another. His work is also dismissed in a few lines (A9). The report does not, however, quite dare to say that the Holy Spirit says in 1979 that sodomy is right. The convictions of contemporary Christians are also quoted as authoritative but it is pointed out that there is disagreement among them (A10). Science provides insights but not "an over-riding authority on moral matters" (A11).
10. The report argues that men and women are intended to love and to enter into permanent fulfilling relationships. There is nothing new in this. But

A25 moves onto quite new ground. "The physical expression of sexuality may be given or withheld. This expression may include or exclude a whole range of reciprocated sexual exchanges to the point of genital activity ..." (We note at this point that the concept of friendship does not appear in the report. Are we in future to regard every embrace between friends and relations as somehow part of a whole range of "reciprocated sexual exchanges"? Surely not.)

11. "The passion and ecstasy which may accompany true love-making - especially in genital encounter - are to be seen as total self-giving and not to be written down as loss of control" (A28). Really? Even if its with your neighbour's wife?
12. The report abolishes rules - arguing speciously that "if men and women are to achieve perfect maturity as persons in relationship with God, they must accept the responsibility of reflecting on moral issues and reaching moral choices." "Absolute rules are impersonal, concentrate on the act itself, and take no account of particular circumstances" (A30). This opens the door to almost anything.
13. The traditional Christian standard of morality, summarised as "chastity before marriage, fidelity afterwards", is contemptuously dismissed (B1). We remember that this concept was agreed in the report of the Central Advisory Council for Education, "Half our Future" (published as late as 1963), in relation to offering school children firm guidance on sexual morality.
14. "It is not surprising that there is much experimenting in contemporary society with various patterns of family and sexual relationships" (B3). It was not surprising in the first century A.D., but the church then called men to something quite different "in Christ". It did not comprise or indulge - it saved out of the prevailing promiscuity of the ancient world.
15. The marriage vows are here passed over as virtually irrelevant. (B8) admits in one sentence that marriages are intended to be indissoluble and then discusses accommodation to their collapse (B9).
16. "The condemnation of adultery in the biblical tradition is the negative way of expressing something of positive value" (B10). Are the writers prepared or unprepared to accept biblical authority and say adultery is wrong?
17. Section C - Homosexuality and Bi-sexuality.

The argument developed here is as follows:

Christians have been harsh against homosexuality. (The report does not mention that the Old Testament and New Testament were "harsh" first). Some societies approve it. The causes are uncertain. Some claim (a doubt here?) "that their Christian experience has transformed their formerly homosexual orientation; other equally sincere Christians have not found this to be so." (C6) Doubt is again cast on the Bible message about homosexual acts. Some forms of homosexuality are declared by the writers to be wrong, but so are some heterosexual marriages. "Christians ought to argue that stable permanent relationships can be an appropriate way of expressing a homosexual orientation. This involves an acceptance of homosexual activities as not being intrinsically wrong". It all depends on the quality of the relationship, as with heterosexual relationships (C9). The conclusion then reached is the report's main objective: "The open acceptance of homosexuality obviously removes the grounds for denying any person membership of the church or an office in it solely because they have a particular sexual orientation" (C9). Christians "who discover themselves to be homosexual" may need special support if they are to come to terms with their sexuality and to retain their faith within the Church which has a long anti-homosexual tradition. Criticism of all past Christians is clearly implied. (C10). "The only ultimate scandal is that of lovelessness" (C12). This is contrary to Old and New Testament teaching, which cannot be summarized in a sentence.

18. To sum up:

The new accommodation within Christian teaching of the homosexual act is brought about by skillful undermining of confidence in past biblical and Christian teaching; the assumption that homosexuality is a fixed condition rather than, as hitherto believed, a disposition; absence of any discussion on temptation and resistance to it (an indispensable aspect of the Christian message); equivocation in attitude to all past landmarks as to right and wrong acts; discrediting of the Holy Spirit's power to cleanse the walk of every truly born again person; and acceptance of the right of the instincts to rule the conduct of the believer.

19. We would here set out what we believe to be the best Christian view, claiming nothing original and admitting that Christians have frequently fallen far short of its standards. We need to distinguish:
  - (a) The normal "gang" stage of child development through which all children pass, when they simply prefer companionship with their own sex;
  - (b) Adolescent and adult friendship between members of the same sex;
  - (c) The desire for homosexual practices (often the symptom of psycho-sexual immaturity); and
  - (d) Homosexual behaviour or sodomy (intercourse per anum, as the law of the land defines it).

The third of these is wrong only if entertained and welcomed. Temptation is not a sin if it is resisted. Only (d) is what clear Old and New Testament and Christian traditional teaching have always seen as forbidden by God, defilement of the body (muscle damage and infection occur), corruption of true friendship and abuse of genuine sexuality.

The following scriptural passages refer to homosexual behaviour and declare it to be sin in the most forthright terms:-

Genesis 19, particularly verse 5, Judges 19, particularly verse 22, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Deuteronomy 22:13, Romans 1:26, 27, 1Timothy 1:8-10, Epistle of Jude, verse 7

The faith of the Christian is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, is now in heaven and gives the Holy Spirit to the believer in response to faith in Christ Jesus. It follows logically from this that the Spirit will vindicate Christ's earthly teaching to those willing to submit to it. He does not contradict basic Old and New Testament teaching.

All Christians are responsible for showing loving kindness and humility to the homosexual seeking freedom from the sin of sodomy, as they themselves look to fellow-Christians to show them loving kindness as they resist their own special temptations. This is not the same as accommodating the sin itself. The churches can have no message when they argue that behaviour is right because it happens.

20. We would respectfully draw the Methodist believers' attention to the need for:-
  - (a) A repudiation of this report.
  - (b) The need for studies to be made of the pastoral ministries of those who have counselled homosexual converts who have difficulties in overcoming sexual temptation.
  - (c) Establishment and support of further services to help the homosexual along the lines of these proven ministries.
  - (d) The advertising of such services to the public.
  - (e) A campaign to warn against the dangers and unhappiness of homosexual behaviour and to make known the resources through which freedom may be obtained.



## **John Harris - Cornish Miner, Poet and Preacher 1820-1884**

John Harris was born on the 14th October, 1820 at Bolenowe, Near Tron. He started work at Dolcoath Mine at 10 years old and at the age of 13 his father took him to work underground.

In his autobiography John describes his first day: 'On my first descent into the mine my father went before with a rope fastened to his waist, the other end of which was attached to my trembling self. If my hands and feet slipped from the rounds of the ladder, perhaps my father might catch me, or the sudden jerk might pull us both into the darkness to be bruised to death on the rocks. Sometimes, with the candle stuck to my hat crown I could not see from side to side,' The descent was over six or seventy ladders to the depth of 200 fathoms or 1,200 feet. This was repeated countless times, as was climbing out at the end of the day 'But climbing up evening after evening, that was the task of tasks! Ladder after ladder, ladder after ladder it seemed the top would never be reached. At last, the air of heaven fanned our foreheads and filled our lungs with new life, though our flannel dress could not have been wetter if emerged in a river.' Harris was to spend 24 years toiling in this hard, dangerous and unhealthy life until an opportunity to escape presented itself.

