

STATEMENT OF BELIEF REGARDING SEXUALITY

by the Cornerstone United Reformed Church of Edmonton

PREAMBLE:

We base our beliefs on the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God, also known as the Bible or the Scriptures, consisting of the Old and the New Testaments. All scripture references (texts) in this statement are taken from the New King James version of the Bible.

PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT:

In response to the church's task to "be exemplary and a shining light in this dark world", we provide this statement to clearly define our beliefs and teachings regarding human sexuality.

A. STATEMENT:

We believe that sexual relations are to be expressed and enjoyed only within a marriage relationship between one man and one woman.

B. GROUNDS FOR THIS STATEMENT:

1. Creation:

We believe that our God created all things out of nothing, i.e., the entire universe. This creation of all things includes the creation of man (i.e., male and female human beings). The Word of God states:

- 1.1 *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth."* (Genesis 1:27, 28a);
- 1.2 *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.* (Genesis 2:18, 22);
- 1.3 *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24).

From the above texts we note the following:

- re: 1.1 God made man (human beings) male and female with the ability to have sexual relations and with the ability of procreation;
- re: 1.2 God created the distinction between the sexes;
- re: 1.3 Genesis 2:24, recognized by the New Testament (see 4.1) and the church as the divine charter for marriage between one man and one woman, prohibits pre-marital, extramarital, and same-sex sexual relationships. The order of Genesis 2:24 implies that sexual relations belong only within a marriage ("...leave... be united... become one flesh").

2. The Commandments:

The seventh commandment, "Do not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), where adultery is to be understood as any sexual activity other than between husband and wife, requires us to shun any such activity outside of the prescribed marriage context.

3. The Old Testament:

Old Testament scriptures prohibit unnatural sexual relations such as homosexuality and bestiality:

- 3.1 *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.* (Leviticus 18:22).
- 3.2 *If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.* (Leviticus 20:13).

3.3 *Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion. (Leviticus 18:23).*

4. The New Testament.

New Testament scriptures are consistent with Old Testament scriptures.

4.1 The divine charter for marriage as first stated in Genesis 2:24 (see 1.3) is repeated literally in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ restated the charter in Matthew 19:5 as did the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:31. From these Biblical statements, we have concluded that God's original ordinance of marriage (with all that it entails, including sexual activity) is only appropriate within the context of marriage between a man and a woman.

4.2 The Old Testament and the New Testament are unified in their condemnation of homosexual behaviour. The evaluation of the behaviour mentioned in Genesis 19:5-7 by Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:49-50, 2 Peter 2:6-8 and Jude 1:7 makes that clear. The New Testament prohibits homosexual activity where it says:

4.2.1 *"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, ... For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. (Romans 1:24-25a, 26-27).*

4.2.2 *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites¹, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).*

4.3 The New Testament prohibits immorality and adultery where it says, *"Neither fornicators ... nor adulterers ... inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

4.4 The New Testament prohibits pornography where it says, *"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28)

5. The Heidelberg Catechism:

Our adopted exposition of the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery," as it is found in Questions and Answers 108 & 109 of the Heidelberg Catechism and elucidated by relevant proof texts, demonstrates that we believe any sexual activity outside the parameters of marriage between one man and one woman to be condemned by God:

108 Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is accursed of God¹, and that we must, therefore, detest it from the heart², and live a chaste and continent life³ both within and outside of holy wedlock⁴.

¹ Lev. 18:28-30 ² Jude 1:23 ³ I Thess. 4:3-5 ⁴ Heb. 13:4; I Cor. 7:1-7

109. Q. Does God in this commandment forbid nothing more than adultery and such like gross sins?

A. Since our body and soul are both temples of the Holy Spirit, it is His will that we keep both pure and holy; wherefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words¹, thoughts, desires², and whatever may entice thereto³.

¹ Eph. 5:3, 4; I Cor. 6:18-20, 19 ² Matt. 5:27-29 ³ Eph. 5:18; I Cor. 15:33

- ¹. The two Greek terms translated by the words underlined refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts. The English Standard Version captures this well by translating the phrase as, 'men who practice homosexuality.'

C. Implementation of our belief:

While we believe that we are called by our God to reject adultery as described in B.2 because it is sin, we do not hate or reject the sinner as a person; rather, we see him or her as one who should be encouraged to view themselves in the light of what Christ Jesus accomplished at the cross of Calvary. *"For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9), and again in 1Corinthians 6:20, "For you are bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* Therefore, for those professing Christ who struggle with such temptations, we remind them that *"we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:15-16) For these reasons we seek the spiritual and emotional well-being of those who struggle with these sins, that they may rely on the grace offered to them and find strength and perseverance to live in a manner worthy of their calling.

Likewise, we believe it is the church's calling to persevere in its duty of encouraging, counselling, and praying for those who seek to turn from themselves and find their identity in Christ as a new creation. The church does not look down upon anyone who commits a sexual, or any other, sin; rather, those of the church admit that they themselves are sinners and in and of themselves are no better than any other person in the world. When the church uses words like "sin", "prohibit" or "adultery", it does not in this way mean to be judgmental; rather, it only repeats what the Bible says about these matters and, at the same time, and according to the command of Jesus Christ, offers the gospel of salvation and renewal to any and all who will listen.

Since membership in the church requires us to submit to the Word of God in both our doctrine (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy), any member who breaches what Scripture has clearly revealed and refuses to repent upon the admonition of the elders of the church will become subject to the spiritual discipline of the church and to its adopted protocols.

Adopted by the Consistory and Membership of The Cornerstone United Reformed Church Of Edmonton

DATED: _____ in the year _____ in Edmonton
(Month/Day) (Year)

CLERK: _____
(Print Name) (Signature)

CHAIRMAN: _____
(Print Name) (Signature)