

Human beings are created for relationships. It is through relationships – between parents and children, siblings, friends, co-workers, and certainly, husband and wife – that people learn how to give and receive love. While all relationships require some degree of trust and commitment, God designed the marital relationship to be unique in that husband and wife are bound to each other in a covenant: they are to be united and devoted exclusively to one another all the days of their lives. It is in the context of this covenantal union that God has granted the gift of sex, to enable husband and wife to experience intimacy with one another and through which children may be conceived.

From the above, which is rooted in the Bible's teaching on sex and relationships, the church takes the view that sexual activity beyond the context of a male-female marital union does not honour God's plan. This includes pre-marital and extra-marital sex between a man and woman, self-gratifying sex (e.g. the use of pornography), and same-sex acts. These and other aberrations in sexual behaviour, even when they involve mutual consent, go against our call as human beings in creation – to be stewards of all the gifts and resources God has given us (including our sexuality), so as to serve and promote the well-being of others.

However, while these aberrations go against God's intended design, we acknowledge that there are complex reasons for why people struggle with different sexual impulses and temptations, ranging from the biological to the sociological, from the emotional to the spiritual. These, along with distortions in every other aspect of human life, are a consequence of living in a world which continues to suffer from the pervasive effects of the Fall.

The church, whose joy and responsibility it is to bring God's shalom (wholeness) into a broken world, therefore desires to journey with all who struggle with their sexuality in any way. Through the ministry of teaching, pastoral care, and practical support, we desire to help and bring restoration to all who long to live according to God's design and purposes.

On the specific subject of same-sex orientation and relationships, which has become more of a focus in recent times, the church affirms the following:

- Persons with a same-sex orientation are to be seen and treated as fellow human beings with similar human struggles, concerns and needs as persons with an opposite-sex attraction. Respect should be given to, and no discrimination should be made against, all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation.

- The church is a community of redeemed sinners. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, all sins, whether they take the form of pride, sloth, or same-sex acts, should be treated with equal seriousness. There is no "hierarchy of sins".
- While an opposite-sex orientation is part of God's original design for human beings, having such an orientation is not the ultimate goal of the Christian faith – wholehearted trust and faithful obedience to Christ is. For various reasons, it may not always be possible for those with a same-sex orientation to develop an opposite-sex orientation in this lifetime. What is important is for all Christians, whether they have an opposite or same-sex orientation, to live lives of sexual purity, which equates to faithfulness to one's spouse within, and abstinence outside, a male-female marriage.
- While the church recognises that persons with same-sex orientation may experience committed, intimate relationships with one another, the church cannot in good conscience sanction same-sex marriages because these go against God's revealed design in Scripture. However, the church encourages all, regardless of their sexual orientation, to pursue authentic, mutually edifying relationships with members from both sexes, as God has given these as sources of support and encouragement in our life journey.

Ultimately, the church calls the world to hope – hope that humanity, and all creation, are on a journey of being made gloriously whole by Christ and for Christ. Such hope gives us the peace and joy, courage and confidence to live according to God's design for relationships and sexuality in this present age. For those who struggle with a disordered sexuality, such hope encourages us to live in faithful obedience to God, with the assurance that Christ and His Holy Spirit will enable us to do so. For those who may not struggle in this particular area, such hope compels us to love and accept those who struggle sexually, and to encourage them to live accordingly to God's ways, even as we allow them to similarly encourage us in our faith.

In all this, we anticipate the final consummation when the Church, the Bride of Christ, will see Him face to face, and enjoy unparalleled intimacy and oneness with Him forever.