



Diocese of Nelson

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

(Adopted by Synod at Greymouth 9 October 2004)

- A. Synod adopted the following statement, recommended by the Diocese of Nelson Theology Commission, to be the policy of the Diocese, and affirmed that it is a policy statement having force until such time as a future Synod of the Diocese of Nelson revises or replaces it.
- B. Synod requested the Bishop of Nelson and his successors to apply this statement as appropriate to the life of the Diocese, including decisions regarding ordination, licensing, and permission to officiate.

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

1. Holy Scripture is the final authority on all matters of faith and practice, including marriage and sexuality. The interpretation of Holy Scripture is a matter on which dialogue occurs within the church, and to which the Tradition of the universal church of Jesus Christ and statements of church councils, including Lambeth Conferences, and our own Synod contribute; this statement being such a contribution.
2. The church is the people of God in mission to the world, as taught by Scripture, witnessing to new life in Christ made possible through Christ's death on the cross and resurrection to life, and available to all people through repentance from sin and belief in Christ; in this mission the church desires that people experience the true grace of God and freedom in Christ which is the healing of our wounded humanity; this grace and freedom being available to all people, including people of all sexualities and whether or not they are single, married, widowed, divorced, remarried, or otherwise; and to this mission the Diocese of Nelson is committed. This statement is intended to assist rather than inhibit this mission as described above.
3. The clear intention of Scripture is that marriage is a monogamous, lifelong, covenantal relationship between a man and a woman; it is a gift from God which provides a holy and blessed context for a husband and a wife to encourage each other's love for God, to develop their love for each other, to enjoy sexual intercourse, and to begin and nurture family life; it is not equivalent to other forms of relationships described as 'de facto marriage' or 'civil union' even though these relationships may contain elements in common with marriage as defined here; and it is not a relationship into which two people of the same gender may enter.
4. The mission of Christ's church includes the nurture, encouragement, and instruction of single people, married couples and families in the way of Jesus Christ; and the development of faith communities as true and loving expressions of the family of God in which Christian people of all ages and stages in life, including all sexualities, recognise themselves and each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. As an expression of the mission of the church and of this Diocese's commitment to marriage as defined above, ordained priests in the Diocese of Nelson are encouraged to conduct marriage services (providing such conduct is in accordance with Title G Canon 3 of Marriage and relevant civil laws which apply); but because of our commitment to marriage no licensed minister, lay or ordained, may participate in leading any service, ritual, ceremony, or blessing of a relationship which is similar to marriage such as a 'civil union', whether such relationship is between two people of opposite sexes or the same sex, and whether or not such relationship is legally recognized in Aotearoa New Zealand or any other country or formally recognized by the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia.
6. Singleness is an honourable way of life specifically endorsed by Jesus' own example and by the Scriptures. The Diocese of Nelson acknowledges a continuing tension in the life of the church as it seeks to honour both marriage and singleness. (Singleness is here defined as not being in a sexual relationship with another person).
7. Honouring both marriage and singleness in today's church involves facing sensitive pastoral questions concerning people who identify themselves as homosexual, are divorced, or divorced and remarried.
8. While acknowledging that a range of views concerning sexuality exists within God's church at this time, the Diocese of Nelson itself maintains the view that Scripture endorses marriage between a man and a woman as the only acceptable domain for sexual relationships, and therefore does not endorse sexual relationships between people of the same gender.
9. Consistent with clause 8 above the Diocese of Nelson requires its licensed ministers, ministers with permission to officiate, and office-holders to be either single (that is, not in a sexual relationship with another person) or married; and if married to be sexually faithful to their spouse.
10. The Diocese of Nelson determines for the guidance of the Bishop of Nelson that clause 8 and 9 above interprets and further defines Title D Canon 1 Part 10.4 and 10.4.1 which read:
 - 10.4 CHASTITY:
Chastity is the right ordering of sexual relationships.
 - 10.41 Ministers are to be chaste. Promiscuity is incompatible with chastity.
11. The Diocese of Nelson recognises a specific challenge to its mission at this time when voices in the world and in the church are calling for a different assessment of the morality of same sex relationships than that given in this statement; it encourages ministers and congregations to work creatively and compassionately to welcome all people into our churches, especially in this context, people who identify themselves as homosexual.
12. The Diocese of Nelson expects that any licensed ministers, ministers with permission to officiate, and office holders in the Diocese will uphold the views of the Diocese as expressed in this statement, both by their example of lifestyle and in their teaching and in any public statements they should make.