

## Marriage and Gender at Faith Church

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Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church feels compelled to apologize, on behalf of the Church at large, for the demonization of homosexuality and the shunning or rejecting of any individuals for their same-sex desires. We affirm, in the strongest possible way, that those of us who have heterosexual desires are not more entitled to the grace of Jesus Christ than those of us who have homosexual ones. Nor are heterosexuals in less need of that saving grace.

Faith Church stands against any form of evil, including prejudice, bigotry and violence. We believe that moral disagreement is not a license for slander or harassment of any contrary group.

Faith Church also highly esteems the marriage covenant. This gift from God has been given to us to learn of God's love for us, for our enjoyment and for procreating His image-bearers to fill the earth. Along with the clear teaching in the Sacred Scriptures, we affirm that this gift, which pertains to our lives' most intimate relationships, is to be expressed through a union that is life-long, monogamous, and across the genders. The importance of gender in defining the marriage covenant is affirmed throughout the Bible, including the specific teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ himself (*Matthew 19:4-6*). In short, Christian marriage is given to be between one man and one woman.

Among the manifold blessings of marriage is sexual intimacy. Sexual activity outside of this sacred covenant, otherwise known as fornication, is sinful (*Mark 7:21-23, Galatians 5:19*). Hence, Jesus' alternative to intergendered marriage is celibacy (*Matthew 19:10-12*). Though we repent of any needless pain caused by the Church to those who struggle with same-sex desires, and though same-sex unions may supply some of the benefits, such as pleasure and companionship, which God, in His common grace, bestows on us through relationships, we cannot affirm monogendered (romantic same-sex) unions as God's will for followers of Christ. Homosexual acts are not more deserving of condemnation than any other sexual acts that disrupt this covenant design.

Furthermore, Faith Church is committed to celebrating gender, the deeply Biblical reality of our identities. We believe that it is dehumanizing to compel anyone to found his or her identity on sexual desires. So we resist efforts to coerce people into labeling themselves as "gay" or "lesbian" just because they experience same-sex attraction. We harm people when we make the nature of their sexual desires their identifying characteristic. Rather, all of us can find healing and direction through more deeply understanding and affirming our genders as women and men in relationship.

Finally, Faith Church vehemently resists the denial of choice to those seeking change in their sexual desires. The process of change takes different forms for different people, but the church is here to provide an environment of grace that allows failure alongside the challenge to growth, whether in this area of behavior or in any other. We pledge to walk beside those who experience unwanted same-sex attraction and who wish to take the Scriptures, the gift of gender, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, seriously. God always makes a way for us, whatever our situation and life experience. So we invite all to find the freedom of obedience to Christ here alongside fellow sinners made new.

To those opening their hearts to this transforming power of God, Faith Church opens its doors with a warm welcome.