



Affirmation of Marriage

The ministers of our North American Baptist Conference welcome the privilege that our respective civil governments give them to solemnize marriages as a part of their Christian ministry. Our convictions about the nature of marriage, however, are governed by the same biblical authority that informs all our teaching and ministry. Therefore, our ministers will in good conscience only perform weddings consistent with the view of marriage expressed in the following Christian Affirmation of Marriage.

We believe:

That God's intention for marriage is established throughout the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. This is expressed in creation and the creation story, the law of Moses, the wisdom literature, and in the prophetic tradition. The Divine establishment of marriage is confirmed by the words of Jesus and the New Testament authors. They provide guidance for perfecting marriage, and affirm its spiritual significance. Chaste singleness and marriage are both honored as faithful and holy lifestyles ordained by God.

That God ordained marriage as a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman. Our creation as man and woman, who are complementary to one another, has significance in revealing aspects of the image of God, and His relationship to humanity. The permanence of the marital bond mirrors God's faithfulness, just as its monogamy reflects God's singular devotion to his people and his people's singular devotion to him.

That sexual intimacy is legitimate only within the bounds of marriage. The commands of God are clear. Sexual activity profoundly affects

people emotionally and spiritually. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage, promiscuity, common law relationships, adultery, homosexual acts, exploitation, incest and sexual perversion contradict God's purpose for human sexuality.

That marriage is more than a contract between two persons: It is a covenant before God. God is committed to every marriage between a man and a woman. In the covenant of marriage, God joins a man and a woman together 'in one flesh', and forbids anyone to break it. This covenant is unique, among human relationships, to marriage. God intends the married couple to reconcile and celebrate His call to an irrevocable commitment to love, to cherish and remain faithful which transcends the quid pro quo of contracts.

That in Christian marriages, the Church acts as an agent of God's blessing, as a primary witness and as a supportive community. The church declares the blessing of God but does not create that

benefit. Therefore the church cannot confer the spiritual blessing of marriage on other relationships.

That a healthy marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children. The practical benefits of marriage are inherent to its form. A healthy marriage is a unique source of benefits for children including the stability of the family and the access of children to a mother and a father. God intended that children should receive nurture from male and female parents, and in turn learn to honor both. Neither the church nor anyone else can confer the innate benefits of marriage on other forms of relationships or unions.

That the Bible teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman only, and to recognize other unions as legitimate marriages would be contrary to our understanding of scripture within the North American Baptist Conference.

We affirm, in accordance to the North American Baptist Conference Statement of Beliefs, that each person is unique, possesses dignity, and

is worthy of respect. We also affirm that we are called to introduce each person to the loving, reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ and the life changing transformation described in scripture. As Christians we seek to demonstrate God's love to all people, but we will not compromise our convictions on marriage as defined by scripture. Therefore, be it resolved that:

- 1. As a matter of belief, doctrine and religious practice, the North American Baptist Conference reserves the term 'marriage' for the covenant relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.
- 2. And that the North American Baptist Conference establishes the standard that all individuals, who are licensed to perform marriages, will not officiate at, or co-officiate at any marriage outside of the previously stated definition of marriage.
- 3. And that in the event that an individual licensed to perform marriages, officiates at or co-officiates as a pastor at a marriage that is outside of the previously stated definition of marriage, will be subject to disciplinary review and loss of license.
- 4. And we recommend that all North American Baptist Conference churches adopt the above as a policy of their individual, local church, and review their 'church use policies' to reflect the resolution as stated.
- 5. And that the facilities of North American Baptist Conference churches will not be used for weddings or receptions where the marriage union is contrary to the provisions of this resolution.