

SOCIAL STATEMENTS

OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Sex, Marriage, and Family

*Adopted by the Fifth Biennial Convention
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Sex, marriage, and family are gifts of God in which to rejoice. Their essential goodness cannot be obscured by any crisis of our time.

As traditional moral codes are being challenged, there is a profound struggle to formulate bases of ethical judgment which have meaning for contemporary man. Powerful forces of social change, joined with discoveries in the medical and life sciences, influence all aspects of human existence. The church is concerned not only with specific issues and controversies, but with the basic Christian understanding of man's sexuality.

HUMAN SEXUALITY

Who is man? Man is a responsible person made in the image of God. God created male and female, making sexual interdependence serve the divine intention for life-in-community. Scripture portrays man as a relational being whose true humanity is realized in faith and love with God and neighbor.

True humanity is violated by sin, which is man's broken relationship with God and fellowman. This alienation expresses itself in all facets of life, including sex, marriage, and family. At the same time God works in these broken relationships, healing and freeing the forgiven to devote their efforts to the well-being of others.

Human sexuality is a gift of God for the expression of love and the generation of life. As with every good gift, it is subject to abuses which cause suffering and debasement. In the expression of man's sexuality, it is the integrity of his relationships which determines the meaning of his actions. Man does not merely have sexual relations; he demonstrates his true humanity in personal relationships, the most intimate of which are sexual.

MARRIAGE

Christian faith affirms marriage as a covenant of fidelity — a dynamic, lifelong commitment of one man and one woman in a personal and sexual union. While hereafter in this report the phrase "covenant of fidelity" is employed, and we recognize it as expressing a key insight about Christian marriage, in biblical language, it may also be helpful at times to express the same emphasis in other terminology through such a phrase as "mutual commitment to lifelong faithfulness" as a substitute for a "covenant of fidelity." Marriage is not simply a legal transaction which can be broken

when the conditions under which it was entered no longer exist. It is an unconditional relationship, a total commitment based on faithful trust. This union embodies God's loving purpose to create and enrich life. As the needs of the partners change, the covenant of fidelity must be renewed by God's grace and continually reaffirmed by husband and wife.

This view transcends the civil understanding of marriage as a legal contract. A marital union can be legally valid yet not be a covenant of fidelity, just as it can be a covenant of fidelity and not a legal contract. Such a covenant is also to be distinguished from an identification with the marriage pattern of any particular culture, from the idea that an established structure is normative for all times, and from the legalistic notion that because two people have had sexual intercourse they are bound together forever. The existence of a true covenant of fidelity outside marriage as a legal contract is extremely hard to identify.

Marriage is ordained by God as a structure of the created order. Thus the sanction of civil law and public recognition are important and beneficial in marriage, as checks against social injustice and personal sin. The marriage covenant, therefore, should be certified by a legal contract, and Christian participants should seek the blessings of the church.

The relationship between husband and wife is likened in Ephesians 5:21-23 to the relationship between Christ and the church. This depicts a communion of total persons, each of them living for the other. As with the covenant between Christ and the church, the promise of fidelity is fundamental. Therefore, Christians regard marriage as a primary setting in which to live out their calling from the Lord.

However, many persons are single for varied reasons. There should be no exaltation of either the single or the married state, one over the other. It is a matter for gratitude when the conditions of life make possible free and open choices.

FAMILY

The family has the function of nurturing human beings in relationships which are rich with creative possibilities. It provides the surrounding in which persons enhance rather than exploit one another, in which mistakes may be made and forgiveness realized.

The family appears in many forms in different times and places. It develops in response to the need of men, women, and children, whether married or unmarried, for a primary relationship in which they may have a sense of intimacy and belonging. There is no greater challenge today than in the family, for it is intended by God to be that basic community in which personhood is fostered. The family should not become centered on itself, but should be seen as a base from which its members move out to participate in society.

ETHICAL DECISION

The Christian's ethical decisions are made in the context of his relationships with God and other persons. The Christian acts knowing that he daily becomes alienated from God and daily needs God's forgiveness. Under God's grace, however, he is freed to choose how best to serve his fellowmen in Christian love.

The Christian needs more than love to guide him. In making decisions he should recognize that he and the other persons with whom he acts are unique men, women, and children with particular gifts and responsibilities, living in particular places and relationships. Furthermore, he draws his guidance and strength from the Christian revelation, bringing to each situation the benefits of the accumulated wisdom and supporting fellowship of the church.

Human life must be regulated by just laws because man is finite and sinful. Such laws, enacted by reason and enforced by power, can never be the direct expression of Christian love. Nevertheless, Christians as citizens and the church as institution should join with others in advocating and supporting just laws. In this process, however, it is not proper for any church to impose its sectarian views on the general community.

SOME CURRENT ISSUES

The following statements are not to be thought of as categorical laws or "Christian" solutions to the problems involved. Nor are they intended to furnish easy answers to hard questions. They are offered as guidance to pastors and laymen in their ethical decision-making.

1. *Some Issues Related to Sexual Expression*

Within the realm of human sexuality, intercourse is a joyful means of giving oneself in the mutual expression of love. It is within the permanent covenant of marital fidelity that the full potential of coitus to foster genuine intimacy, personal growth, and the responsible conception of children is realized.

Because the Lutheran Church in America holds that sexual intercourse outside the context of the marriage union is morally wrong, nothing in this statement on "Sex, Marriage, and Family" is to be interpreted as meaning that this church either condones or approves premarital or extra-marital sexual intercourse.

Scientific research has not been able to provide conclusive evidence regarding the causes of homosexuality. Nevertheless, homosexuality is viewed biblically as a departure from the heterosexual structure of God's creation. Persons who engage in homosexual behavior are sinners only as are all other persons — alienated from God and neighbor. However, they are often the special and undeserving victims of prejudice and discrimination in law, law enforcement, cultural mores, and congregational life. In relation to this area of concern, the sexual behavior of freely consenting adults in private is not an appropriate subject for legislation or police action. It is essential to see such persons as entitled to understanding and justice in church and community.

Sexual exploitation in any situation, either personally or commercially, inside or outside legally contracted marriage, is sinful because it is destructive of God's good gift and man's integrity.

The church recognizes the effects of social environment and cultural traditions on human behavior. It seeks, therefore, to respond understandingly to persons who enter into relationships which do not demonstrate a covenant of fidelity.

2. *Some Issues Related to Marriage*

It is the quality of interpersonal relationships within marriage that is the concern of the church. A covenant of fidelity can be broken in reality whether the union terminates formally through legal action or displays external solidarity. In ministering to persons affected by a broken covenant the church is called to assist them to perceive their problems more clearly and, hopefully, to experience forgiveness and reconciliation.

If the outcome is formal dissolution of the marriage, the church should continue to minister to all persons involved. To identify the legal action of divorce as sinful by itself obscures the fact that the marital relationship has already been mutually undermined by thoughts, words, and actions. Although divorce often brings anguish to those concerned, there may be situations in which securing a divorce is more responsible than staying together.

When the question of the remarriage of a divorced man or woman arises, the church and the individuals themselves will do well to concentrate upon the potential of the new rather than the collapse of the former marriage. A clear understanding of the dynamics which led to the breakdown of the first union helps a person prepare more adequately for the second. A divorced man and woman, of course, should fulfill all legitimate obligations to the members of the broken family.

A shared Christian faith contributes to the strength of a marriage. Even more, marriage and family provide a primary setting for Christian nurture and maturity. Before a man and woman enter into an interfaith marriage, each should strive to understand and respect his own faith and the faith of his partner. They should become intelligently informed about factors which can cause special difficulty.

Theologically, marriage between persons without reference to racial and ethnic differences and background is a witness to the oneness of man under the one God, and as such should be fully accepted in both church and society.

3. *Some Issues Related to Conception Control*

The ethical significance of the use of any medically approved contraceptive method within a covenant of marital fidelity depends upon the motivation of the users. A responsible decision for or against having a child will include evaluation of such factors as the health of the potential mother, a reliable prognosis concerning the health of a possible child, the number and spacing of other children, the family's economic circumstances, and the rapid growth of population. People have a right not to have children without being accused of selfishness or a betrayal of the divine plan, and every child has a right to be a wanted child.

All persons are entitled to receive from governmental and voluntary agencies information about conception control.

4. *Some Issues Related to Abortion*

In the consideration of induced abortion the key issue is the status of the unborn fetus. Since the fetus is the organic beginning of human life, the termination of its development is always a serious matter. Nevertheless, a qualitative distinction must be made between its claims and the rights of a responsible person made in God's image who is in living relationships with

God and other human beings. This understanding of responsible personhood is congruent with the historical Lutheran teaching and practice whereby only living persons are baptized.

On the basis of the evangelical ethic, a woman or couple may decide responsibly to seek an abortion. Earnest consideration should be given to the life and total health of the mother, her responsibilities to others in her family, the stage of development of the fetus, the economic and psychological stability of the home, the laws of the land, and the consequences for society as a whole.

Persons considering abortion are encouraged to consult with their physicians and spiritual counselors. This church upholds its pastors and other responsible counselors, and persons who conscientiously make decisions about abortion.

5. *Some Issues Related to Family Life Education.*

There is need for competent education to understand sexuality and to prepare for courtship, marriage, and family.

This kind of education properly begins in the home, where parents teach their children not only by words but by their actions and expression of feeling. But children and young people also learn from other sources, such as the peer group, books, movies and television, which often convey incomplete or distorted information. Parents have the right to expect help from the church in their roles as educators in sex, marriage, and family, particularly in relating their Christian convictions to this task.

The church supports responsible family life education in the public school, so long as religious and moral commitments are respected. Helping young people grow into mature men and women is so important that every possible resource must be involved, including competent, voluntary agencies. But it is the public school that can furnish an education reaching most children and young people. Family life education in the school should include parents in its planning and execution. It should also offer courses for them, coordinated with those their children are taking.

The task of education in sex, marriage, and family requires that the home, the church, and the school prepare themselves for effective fulfillment of their appropriate roles.

A CALL

The Lutheran Church in America calls upon its pastors to reinforce the covenant of fidelity in their liturgical leadership, preaching, teaching, and counseling. It calls upon its members to study this statement and the booklet *Sex, Marriage, and Family: a Contemporary Christian Perspective*; and to give support to one another amid the painful ambiguities of making ethical decisions relating to sex, marriage, and family. It calls upon its agencies of education and social service to develop specific plans for helping synods and congregations incorporate the major emphases of this statement into their lives. It calls upon the church, both as a corporate body and as individual members, to witness to the civic community in behalf of just laws and policies affecting sex, marriage, and family, and in behalf of legislation that will improve the economic and social conditions which influence the lifestyles of people.

 AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

1155 EAST 80TH ST., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637 TELEPHONE (312) 493-0533

December 21, 1973

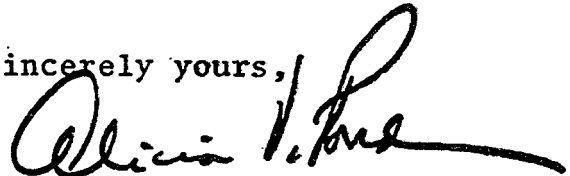
Dr. Bruce Voeller
National Gay Task Force
Suite 1903-1904
80 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

Dear Dr. Voeller:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation today,
the following is the resolution adopted by the
American Bar Association's House of Delegates at
its 1973 Annual Meeting held in Washington, D. C.
on August 6-8:

*Resolved, That the legislatures of the
several states are urged to repeal all
laws which classify as criminal conduct
any form of non-commercial sexual conduct
between consenting adults in private,
saving only those portions which protect
minors or public decorum.*

Sincerely yours,



Alicia V. Pond
Office of the Secretary

AVP:bdc

CIVIL SERVICE
news

U S CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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FOR RELEASE:

ADVANCE FOR THURSDAY AFTERNOON NEWSPAPERS, JULY 3,
NOT TO BE USED BY PRESS, RADIO, OR TV BEFORE
6:30 A.M., EDT, THURSDAY, JULY 3, 1975

The Civil Service Commission has issued new guidelines for evaluating the suitability of individuals for Federal employment.

The guidelines amplify revised suitability standards, approved by the Commission earlier following thorough consideration and consultation with Federal agencies and interested organizations. Both the standards and the guidelines fully reflect significant court decisions, the Government's need to maintain efficiency of operations, and the rights of individuals.

The new guidelines are based on the concept that each case must be decided on its own merits and that all decisions regarding the fitness of applicants or employees should be made in a manner that will promote the efficiency of the service while assuring fair, impartial, and equitable treatment of the individual.

A significant change from past policy -- resulting from court decisions and injunction -- provides for applying the same standard in evaluating sexual conduct, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

"Court decisions require that persons not be disqualified from Federal employment solely on the basis of homosexual conduct," the guidelines point out. "The Commission and agencies have been enjoined not to find a person unsuitable for Federal employment solely because that person is a homosexual or has engaged in homosexual acts. Based upon these court decisions and outstanding injunction, while a person may not be found unsuitable based on unsubstantiated conclusions concerning possible embarrassment to the Federal service, a person may be dismissed or found unsuitable for Federal employment where the evidence establishes that such person's sexual conduct affects job fitness."

Decisions to deny employment to applicants or to separate employees already on the rolls on suitability grounds may be taken only when it can be shown that the conduct of the individual may reasonably be expected to interfere with the ability of the person to function in the job or the agency's ability to discharge its responsibilities. As the courts have ordered, there must be some rational connection between the individual's conduct and the efficiency of the service.

Under the policy and its attendant guidelines for evaluating the suitability of individuals, the following factors may be considered as bases for disqualification:

1. Delinquency or misconduct in prior employment.
2. Criminal, dishonest, infamous, or notoriously disgraceful conduct.
3. Intentional false statement, deception, or fraud in examination or appointment.
4. Refusal to furnish testimony (answers) as required by civil service rules.
5. Habitual use of intoxicating beverages to excess.
6. Abuse of narcotics, drugs, or other controlled substances.
7. Reasonable doubt as to the loyalty of the person involved to the Government of the United States.
8. Any statutory disqualification which makes the person unfit for Federal service.

In making suitability determinations, evaluators must consider each of the following factors to the extent that any or all of the factors are pertinent to the individual case under consideration:

- a. The kind of position the person is applying for or serving in, including its sensitivity.
- b. The nature and seriousness of the conduct.
- c. Circumstances surrounding the conduct.
- d. Recency of the conduct.
- e. Age of the person at the time of the conduct.
- f. Contributing social or environmental conditions.
- g. Absence or presence of rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.

Grps. AO, OPA-3-4, OPA-6-15, AXU-1 & Grp. 26

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WISCONSIN AREA

January 25, 1980



JESSE R. DeWITT
Resident Bishop

MARY E. RUSSELL
Administrative Secretary

325 Emerald Terrace
Sun Prairie, Wisconsin 53590
Telephone: (608) 837-8526

The Honorable David Clarenbach
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Representative Clarenbach:

I am in receipt of your letter indicating the introduction of the Sexual Privacy Bill for the State Legislature, and I want to commend you for your willingness to present such a proposal to the Legislature this session.

As one individual, I am personally supportive of this measure and want to affirm the intention of the legislation.

The protection of human rights is a critical issue in our time and I believe that our State should take a forthright position in assuring the rights of every individual, regardless of age, sex, race or economic position. I believe that this will strengthen and assure the rights of every individual and place us in a firm position for future years.

Thanks for your inquiry and leadership.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jesse R. DeWitt". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jesse R. DeWitt

JRD/mr

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WISCONSIN AREA

January 8, 1980



JESSE R. DeWITT
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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The position of the United Methodist Church, as expressed in the Social Principles adopted by the General Conference in 1976, states that

We recognize that sexuality is a good gift of God, and we believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the Church and society. We call all persons to disciplines that lead to the fulfillment of themselves, others, and society in the stewardship of this gift. Medical, theological, and humanistic disciplines should combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely.

Although men and women are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sex between a man and a woman is only to be clearly affirmed in the marriage bond. Sex may become exploitative within as well as outside marriage. We reject all sexual expressions which damage or destroy the humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only that sexual expression which enhances that same humanity, in the midst of diverse opinion as to what constitutes that enhancement. Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Further we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured, though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.

I support this decision and position and personally affirm that we must protect the right of every individual and that their civil rights must be upheld. This means the right of due process, civil rights, legal and police protection and job security and employment guarantees. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation would deny such rights. This does not in any way condone sexual practices that are in violation of the rights of others or that are actions of violence.

I trust that the legislature of Wisconsin will enact appropriate legislation and assure due process and protection under the law for all of its citizens.

COUNCIL ON MINISTRIES



wisconsin conference

325 EMERALD TERRACE • SUN PRAIRIE, WI
608-837-7328 53590

February 25, 1980

Senator Carl Thompson
Wisconsin State Senate, 31-S
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Senator Thompson:

I would like to express my support for updating the current laws regarding sexual morality as recommended in SB 552. More specifically, I support:

- 1) add the words "in public" to the sodomy and fornication statutes, making these acts criminal only when performed in public;
- 2) repeal the cohabitation statute, thereby decriminalizing the behavior of those who "openly cohabit in circumstances implying sexual intercourse;"
- 3) restore to those convicted under the sodomy statute the right to obtain a driver's license.

It seems to me that such efforts to decriminalize sexual behavior that takes place (1) in private, (2) between adults or married minors, and (3) is based on consent allows us to be more protective of individual and civil rights.

The United Methodist Church challenges governments to provide and protect basic freedoms. Our Social Principles state "We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, and communications media; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. The use of detention and imprisonment for the harassment and elimination of political opponents or other dissidents violates fundamental human rights. Furthermore, the mistreatment or torture of persons by governments for any purpose violates Christian teaching and must be condemned and/or opposed by Christians and churches wherever and whenever it occurs."

I trust that this hearing and legislature will make its decision in light of the protective responsibility governments have regarding the private and civil rights of its citizens. Such rights cover a broad range of human behavior which ought be

the united methodist church

JESSE R. DEWITT: RESIDENT BISHOP
DAVID W. CHEVALIER: CONFERENCE TREASURER
WAYNE D. HELMERICH: SERVICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

DONALD A. OTT: PROGRAM DIRECTOR
MARY H. COUNCIL: PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
IRIS L. HARVEY: PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
THOMAS A. RANNELLS: PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

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February 25, 1980
Senator Carl Thompson

inclusive of sexual behavior. This does not in any way condone sexual practices that are in violation of the rights of others or are actions of violence. However, I am in strong support of legislation that protects the rights of individuals in the area of sexual behavior.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Rannells
Program Associate
Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Church

TAR:amr

cc Timothy Cullen
Michele Radosevich
Joseph Strohl
David Opitz
Dorothy Gosting