FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCHES IN CANADA

Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality

Note: The following Policy Statement, upon its adoption, will replace the "Fellowship Marriage Policy" (Adopted February 22, 2007).

1. Fellowship Policy Statements [Article 15.1(d)]

Policy Statements are expressions of biblical convictions that we hold as Fellowship Baptists that have been approved by the delegates at a National Conference that are consistent with our Affirmation of Faith. We must strive to achieve some standard of expectation that will allow MEMBER churches appropriate levels of liberty in accordance with our historic principle of "soul liberty" on the one hand while not impairing the concept of theological integrity on the other.

Policy Statements are binding upon MEMBER churches. Policy Statements are initially drafted or amended by National Council or by not less than five percent (5%) of MEMBER churches. Policy Statements will have no binding effect until approved by a vote of delegates of MEMBER churches of not less than two-thirds (2/3s) by Special Resolution.

2. The Biblical Definition of Marriage

The definition of marriage continues to shift within the culture. In the broadest sense, "marriage" is used to refer to the formal union of consenting partners into a personal and familial relationship, typically involving sexual intimacy.

As Christians, we believe that God is the originator and designer of marriage, that He has communicated His design through the Bible, and that His design is binding on how we define and practice marriage.

Therefore, notwithstanding the broader sense in which marriage may be defined by the culture, we adopt the following definition of marriage for the belief, doctrine, and religious practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada:

> The term "marriage" is reserved for the formalized covenant relationship between one man and one woman who commit themselves through legal declaration to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence. Marriage is monogamous, heterosexual, and intended for life.

3. A Biblical Understanding of Human Sexuality

(Please refer to the Appendix for further support for the following points)

3.1. Creation: God's Original Design for Human Sexuality

3.1.1. God's revealed will for the fulfillment of human sexual desires, only in faithful heterosexual marriage, provides for human flourishing as individuals and families, and human marriage in obedience to God's will serves as an illustration of God's relationship to His people.

3.1.2. The Bible teaches us that God's will is that we choose to express our sexual identity either in faithful heterosexual marriage or celibate singleness.

3.1.3. God created humans in His image as relational beings existing biologically as either male or female. God's created design is honoured when we align our self-identity with our biological sex. Gender/sexual distinction is honoured when each sees the opposite sex as their equal and when the natural object of sexual desire is agreed to be the opposite sex.

3.1.4. The Bible affirms that all people are loved by God because they are made in God's image. God's love for persons who define their sexuality and sexual orientation contrary to biblical principles does not imply His approval of that definition or orientation or of the practices associated with these perspectives.

3.1.5. As creatures made by God, our true identity and highest joy are found in obedience to the revealed will of our Creator, in respect to both our sexual identity and the sexual relations we choose, as in all of life.

3.1.6. The Bible teaches that celibate singleness, like marriage, is a gift from God. The inability to act on one's sexual desires does not render one less human. Rather, celibate single people demonstrate aspects of what God intends for us as humans that are less apparent in married people.

3.2. The Fall: Human Brokenness and the Distortion of God's Design for Human Sexuality

3.2.1. The Bible declares that humanity's fall into sin has profoundly distorted human relationships with God and others, including the distortion of our human sexuality.

3.2.2. Sexual brokenness results from this distortion and causes confusion and temptation to violate God's will in the expression of our sexual desires. Although sexual temptation is not itself sin, Jesus taught that the decision to act on this temptation in thought or behaviour is sinful.

3.2.3. The Bible declares that sexual sin harms everyone involved. It is counterproductive to the flourishing of society and individuals, and it sometimes results in humiliation, degradation, abuse, or exploitation that violates the inherent dignity of all people as God's image bearers.

3.2.4. The biblical doctrine of original sin teaches us that many human desires are inherently sinful and thus must be managed for good and denied in practice, and this truth is recognized implicitly by all humans.

3.3. Redemption: Christ's Restored Design for Human Sexuality

3.3.1. The Bible declares that the Son of God became human to restore our broken world through His obedient life, death, and resurrection. As new creations in Christ, we are transformed in both our understanding of human sexuality and our sexual practice.

3.3.2. Jesus Christ reaffirmed, through His teaching, God's creational intention. Namely, that the fulfillment and enjoyment of sexual desire take place only within the context of the covenant marriage of one man and one woman.

3.3.3. The risen Christ bestowed upon all His followers the Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers all believers to obey God's will and enables us to express holiness and purity in the expression of our human sexuality.

3.3.4. The Church is designed to be an eternal community where people are enabled to experience healthy, restored relationships with God and others. Sexual gratification, while a good gift from God, is not necessary for the enjoyment of this glorious Church community, nor does its glory compare to it.

3.3.5. The Church is called to affirm the dignity of all people, treating everyone with respect and creating a grace-filled community where our sexual brokenness can be restored, even as we experience sexual temptation or failure. The Church is called to provide love, support, and accountability.

3.3.6. Sexual experience is not absolutely necessary for human flourishing and fulfillment, as evidenced by the life of Jesus Himself and His call to some of His followers to live in celibate singleness.

4. A Summary of the Appendix

4.1. Explanation of the Appendix

We believe Article 2 and Article 3 provide an accurate summary of the Bible's teaching on marriage and human sexuality. The Appendix provides an extended rationale for how and why we have concluded this. Because we believe the Bible is the written Word of God and thus authoritative in all that it teaches, the rationale in the Appendix is critical. The following paragraphs, 4.2 to 4.6, are a summary of the Appendix (see attached).

4.2. Genesis 1-2 as Normative

Following the interpretive approach of both Jesus Christ (Matthew 19 and Mark 10, on divorce) and the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, on male-female order), we are convinced that the creation narrative in Genesis 1-2 reveals both facts about creation and paradigms for human life. The pattern established by God indicates that the appropriate counterpart for a man is a woman (and vice versa), not multiple women or another man (and vice versa), and this pattern is confirmed by Scripture as a whole.

4.3. Polygamy

The broad sweep of Scripture supports marriage as monogamous. Although polygamy is the practice of some significant biblical characters and is acknowledged as reality in Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 21:15-17), Jesus specifically indicates that the Mosaic laws about marriage were God's concession to the spiritual condition of ancient Israel (Matthew 19:8), not a statement of the moral ideal. On the contrary, Jesus affirmed the creation narrative as the moral norm (Matthew 19:4-6), and the apostles of Christ affirm this norm as well (1 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Timothy 3:2).

4.4. The Heterosexual Nature of Marriage

The heterosexual nature of marriage is taught in at least two ways. First, one of the purposes of marriage is procreation to populate the earth (Genesis 1:28), and this clearly assumes a male-female union. Second, Scripture consistently rejects homosexual practice and thus rejects same-sex marriage, as summarized in paragraph 4.5.

4.5. Homosexual Practice

The sins of Sodom were much broader than homosexual activity (Ezekiel 16:49-50), but such activity was included in those sins (Jude 7). The Levitical code condemns homosexual activity (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), and although some aspects of the Levitical laws were temporary matters of ritual purity, the fact that homosexual offenders were severely punished suggests that such actions were basic moral issues and not merely matters of ritual purity. That is further demonstrated in the way that the apostle Paul treats the issue. In Romans 1:26-27 he describes homosexual acts of both men and women as examples of rebellion against the Creator and the created order. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, he describes such a lifestyle as a sign of exclusion from God's Kingdom. Finally, in 1 Timothy 1:10, he includes such activity in a list of violations of God's basic moral law.

4.6. Gender

When this policy statement refers to marriage of "one man" and "one woman", those phrases are understood to refer to persons who are biologically male and female from birth. We believe that the consistent witness of Scripture calls us to accept our biological identity as given by God. The Bible affirms that our essential identity is to be found in our relationship with God, not in our gender or sexual orientation.

4.7. Conclusion

We conclude, then, that to enter into a same-sex marriage is to commit to a sexual union that is regarded by God as sinful. Scripture also teaches us that to act in ways that enable sin by others is itself a sinful act (Romans 14:13-15), and therefore, no Fellowship personnel at national, regional, or local levels will officiate at same-sex marriages.

5. Implications for the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada

5.1. Love, Dignity, and Respect

The Bible establishes that all people are to be treated with love, dignity, and respect, regardless of someone's sexual orientation, religious views, or opinions on sexual ethics. Churches should endeavour to provide people with compassion, resources, and counsel to help them live and flourish according to God's design, as revealed in Scripture.

5.2. Solemnization and Officiating

Neither MEMBER churches nor those who are credentialed and/or licensed (permanent or temporary) will arrange for, officiate at, or lead in (e.g. pray, read Scripture, provide music) the solemnization or celebration of a marriage when it does not conform to the Fellowship's *Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality*. Regions cannot issue credentials for such purposes. While there should be no involvement by credentialed and/or licensed clergy, this Policy does not preclude credentialed and/or licensed clergy from attending same-sex marriages.

5.3. Religious Views and Conscience

A MEMBER church will support their clergy's religious rights to not officiate in any marriage ceremony whatsoever where their participation would violate the clergy's religious views or conscience.

5.4. Member Church Policies

MEMBER churches are strongly encouraged to clarify through church policy the lifestyle standards that are in accord with the Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* and apply such policies consistently.

5.5. Compliance with Policy

Anyone who believes or teaches contrary to the Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* shall not be recognized or affirmed as MEMBER church ministry staff, Fellowship chaplain, or Fellowship missionary, nor may they be nominated to any organizational leadership position within The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. Likewise, any MEMBER church which believes or teaches contrary to the Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* shall not be recognized or affirmed as a Fellowship MEMBER church.

6. The Appendix:

"Theology of Marriage and its Relationship to Biblical Texts"

7. Policy Schedule

Version No.	Issue Date	Author(s)	Brief Description
1.0	April 2017	Marriage Policy Task Force	First draft
2.0	May 2017	Marriage Policy Task Force	Revised draft following Task Force meeting
3.0	Aug. 2017	Various	Changes made based on comments from RDs, SMT, National Council
4.0	Sept. 2017	Marriage Policy Task Force	Revisions made by Task Force based on comments from RDs, SMT, NC
5.0	Oct. 2017	Marriage Policy Task Force	Reworked Sections 3 and 4 and reformatted Recommended Resource attachment
6.0	Feb. 2018	Regional Directors	Reworked section 5
7.0	Apr. 2018	Various	Reordered; other revisions following gathering of pastors to discuss
7.1	May 2018	SMT/National Council	Minor changes
7.2	Aug. 2018	Proof Reader	Minor changes

8. Attachment:

"Resource: Recommended Reading on Human Sexuality" is available upon request.

Appendix
Theology of Marriage and its Relationship to Biblical Texts

Introduction

1. The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches develops policies based upon its interpretation of principles discerned within the Protestant canon of the Bible. These sacred texts form for us the revealed Word of God and as His people we seek to take seriously what God has communicated. We also believe that God communicated in a special way through Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Son of God and Messiah. These sacred texts teach us that Jesus is God in every sense and so we seek to understand Jesus' words as the words of God. Today, God continues to guide us through His Spirit whom we believe to be resident in followers of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to discern the meaning and application of these sacred texts.

The Bible

2.a. The Bible is a remarkable collection of many different literary genres, including poetry, history, prophetic oracles, proverbs, speeches, parables, letters, and ethical instruction. Many common principles of interpretation apply equally to all of these genres because they are literature and amenable to literary analysis. However, it is also the case that each genre is somewhat unique and requires the application of special interpretative principles.

2.b. These documents were produced 2,000 - 3,500 years ago and the history of their production is not recoverable in every instance. Interpretation then is an exercise in cross-cultural understanding, as we seek to discern how these texts had meaning for the people for whom they were produced. Some are written in classical Hebrew, a few in Aramaic, and others in Hellenistic Greek. However, in every case translation into English or French is required for the majority of Canadians to access their content. Translation invariably involves interpretation.

2.c. As Fellowship Baptists we approach this task of biblical interpretation humbly, prayerfully, and collaboratively. We know full well that other groups who claim to be Christian interpret some of these texts quite differently than we do, but this does not absolve us of the responsibility to interpret these texts for ourselves as best we can. We listen carefully to other interpretations, but claim for ourselves the right to interpret these sacred texts based upon application of widely recognized exegetical methods and our theological tradition. For example, our understanding of Christian baptism is very different from major segments of Christianity (e.g., Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran), but we still insist that it is the correct interpretation of respective biblical texts and thus make it our practice. Historically Baptists have paid a serious price for holding to this interpretation.

Interpreting the Bible

3.a. The basic framework we employ for our interpretation of the Bible can be summarized with the expression "historical, contextual, grammatical, literary, canonical exegesis."

3.a.i. Historical – It is our understanding that the biblical texts reflect the experience of real people who lived as human beings and whose stories are now embedded in the biblical narrative in ways that represent truly the reality of their lives and actions. These are neither legend nor myth. Even in the case of the stories in Genesis 1-11, we understand their literary form to be generally the same as that found in the rest of Genesis and so regard them as historical narrative for the most part. While the language may be figurative at certain points (e.g., God being depicted as "breathing" in Genesis 2:7), the text is describing real events in human history. We regard the stories in Genesis 2 about the creation of humans and the

institution of marriage as historically true and believe this is an appropriate and defensible interpretation of these texts.

3.a.ii. Contextual – All of the texts reflect some context: that of the author and/or editor, as well as the intended audience. We are not always able to determine who the author and/or editor might be (e.g., the Book of Ruth) and similarly the original audience is often difficult to establish. Normally we are dependent upon clues in the text itself to give us some indication of both elements. Literacy was known in the Bronze Age as testified by texts from other civilizations in the Ancient Near East and we have no reason to doubt that Israel also possessed similar ability, even as their literary forms show the influence of neighbouring civilizations. For us internal and, where we can reconstruct it with some degree of confidence, external contexts are critically important for discerning the meaning of a text.

3.a.iii. Grammatical – The Bible is a collection of written texts. While they use different languages, we understand enough about these languages to decipher with a fair degree of accuracy the meaning of these texts. We also have thousands of pieces of textual evidence which makes us quite confident that we know what the authors and/or editors intended to communicate through their compositions. We interpret the texts using our best understanding of the grammatical and syntactical principles. This includes detailed semantic study of individual words and idioms. While some rare terms remain obscure in their meaning, the vast majority of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek terms used are well understood. Thus meaning is not arbitrarily discerned, but rather carefully investigated based upon well-known and established linguistic principles. In the case of Hellenistic Greek, we have a vast corpus of resources outside of the New Testament that help us discern the semantic range of terms.

3.a.iv. Literary – We recognize the wide variety of genres within the Bible. An incredible amount of work by many different scholars enables us today to understand to a large degree how these various genres shape the meaning of the text, giving us clues for its proper reading. For example, we appreciate more fully Jesus' discussion with Jewish religious leaders about the question of divorce because it occurs in what is termed a "controversy story." A number of these occur in the Gospel narratives and they tend to follow a similar literary framework. They often incorporate reference to the Jewish Scriptures, which both sides use to establish the authority of their interpretation. However, it is Jesus' interpretation which the writers acknowledge correctly expresses God's intent. While we recognize the literary nature of the text, this does not negate its historical truthfulness, i.e., that at some point in His ministry Jesus actually had a discussion with Jewish religious leaders about the issue of divorce.

3.a.v. Canonical – We also believe that the Protestant canon represents the appropriate boundary for God's revealed Word. As we read these texts, we find evidence that later writers deliberately reference earlier writings. Sometimes this is done through quotes or allusions, or sometimes by referencing people or events. In other cases the relationship is expressed by terms such as promise-fulfillment. In other words texts were written in conscious awareness of earlier material and authors intentionally linked their compositions with these earlier writings. This creates a coherence within the canon and encourages us to interpret sections of the canon in the light of other sections of the canon. The canonical context becomes an important frame of reference for our interpretation of all texts within the canon. The degree of intertextuality varies from author to author, but it is usually present.

3.a.vi. These principles of interpretation guide our investigation and understanding of texts related to marriage. We form our understanding of marriage, as God's people, based upon what we consider to be God's direction given through these texts in our Bible. We do not believe

our interpretation is arbitrary or without scholarly foundation. We believe a careful and detailed study of these biblical texts will place our marriage practice firmly within the broader Christian traditions and understanding about marriage and its theological significance.

Biblical Marriage

4. Based on this approach to Scripture, we affirm that marriage is a union of one man and one woman who commit themselves through public declaration to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence. To put it briefly, marriage is monogamous, heterosexual, and for life.

4.a. In support of this perspective, we begin at the beginning, i.e., the creation narrative of Genesis 1-2. There we find that the proper counterpart to the man is the woman created out of him and for him. God created one wife for the man, not a group of wives or another man. The creation narrative describes not only the facts of human origin, but also a paradigm for humanity. This is seen within the narrative when the text moves from description to prescription at Genesis 2:24 in stating what a man is to do when taking a wife (leave his parents and hold fast to his wife, in a committed relationship of oneness expressed in part through sexual intimacy). The paradigmatic nature of the narrative is also affirmed by Jesus in His response to questions about divorce (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). Although His questioners desired to ensnare Him in a controversy about reasons for divorce and the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jesus appealed to the prior principle in Genesis 2 as indicating God's ideal for humankind and the idea of a one-flesh relationship: a lifelong covenant commitment between a man and woman, established under God's mandate that ought not be destroyed. In other words, Genesis 2 is telling us something about the way things ought to be, not just the way things were. The Mosaic Law was not designed to allow humans to distort and alter God's principles, i.e. to use one part of the Scriptures to disregard another part of God's revelation (cf. the discussion about Korban in Mark 7).

4.a.i. Although Mosaic Law did not forbid polygamy, and some of the leading characters in biblical history (patriarchs and kings) had multiple wives, the broad sweep of biblical revelation indicates that the monogamy of the first humans is the norm. In Jesus' response to the questions about divorce, He indicates that divorcing a spouse and marrying another person is to commit adultery against the first spouse, and if marrying a second spouse after divorce is to sin against the first spouse, then surely to marry a second spouse while married would be a sinful violation of the marital covenant (Mark 10:1-12). We also note that Jesus taught that the allowance for divorce in Mosaic Law was God's concession to the hardness of heart of the Israelites, not a statement of the moral ideal (Mark 10:1-12). One cannot, then, treat the particulars of Mosaic Law or the mere facts of marriage in biblical history as the moral norm. Apostolic teaching about marriage in general (1 Corinthians 7) and moral requirements for church leaders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1) extend Jesus' affirmation of radical commitment to monogamy.

Homosexuality and the Bible

4.b. The heterosexual nature of marriage is revealed in Scripture in two ways.

First, in the creation narrative (Genesis 1:28) God commands the man and woman to produce offspring. However, we have to wait until Genesis 2:23-25 to discover that God mandates marriage and He intends human reproduction to occur in the context of this marital relationship. This clearly assumes a sexual union of a man and a woman.

Second, there is throughout the biblical canon a consistent rejection of homosexual practice as an immoral violation of God's created order. We recognize that others within the wider Church argue that the witness of these biblical texts should not be read as a timeless and trans-cultural norm, but we affirm the historic understanding of the Church and reject this revisionist approach to the biblical texts. There is no trajectory or positive movement within Scripture that would suggest a change in perspective within the developing biblical documents.

Homosexuality and the Old Testament

4.b.i. The place to begin is again at the beginning, the creation paradigm. The appropriate partner for the man is the woman, creating a union of two who are equally the image of God but who are not equivalent and who are designed specifically by God to suit and assist one another via their respective gender distinctiveness.

4.b.ii. The story of Sodom (Genesis 19) is obviously significant in the history of this debate. Many have rightly noted that the sins for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed were not simply sexual sins. The prophet Ezekiel (16:49-50), in fact, begins his description of Sodom's guilt by referring to their materialism and callous disregard for the poor and needy, but we note that he also describes their sin as inclusive of "detestable things," a term used in Mosaic Law to describe homosexual sin (Leviticus 18:22). In Ezekiel 16:23-48 Yahweh continually accuses Israel of prostitution and then names this as something "more detestable" (vv. 50-51) than the "detestable thing" that the inhabitants of Sodom did. We also note that in the New Testament, Jude 7 ("they indulged in illicit sexual relations and went after 'another kind of flesh'") refers to the sin of Sodom as inclusive of sexual immorality, and the connection to the attitudes described in Genesis 19 is obvious. The sin of Sodom was broader than sexual immorality, but it was not less than that. The verb in LXX Genesis 19:5 is συγγενώμεθα which Muraoka (in *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*) defines as "to have sexual intercourse with", and in this context it is men with men. It always refers to "illicit intercourse" (p. 641). Lust, Eynikel and Hauspie (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*) use the same definition (volume 2, p. 444). Wevers (*Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*) says that both the Greek and Hebrew texts mean "to have sexual relations with" (p. 268).

4.b.iii. In the laws about sexual purity contained in Mosaic legislation, sexual relations between two men are explicitly condemned (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Although there is no Levitical text that directly addresses sexual relations between two females, the generally androcentric nature of ancient Israel would suggest that the laws about men would implicitly apply to women as well. We recognize that Mosaic Law had a limited purpose of guiding Israel until the arrival of Messiah, and now that Messiah has come and inaugurated the new covenant, we cannot simply apply every Mosaic restriction directly (see Galatians 3:15-29). But it is generally recognized that while some Levitical laws are temporary and not timeless (e.g., dietary restrictions), other laws represent God's timeless concerns, and the statements of New Testament authors indicate that they assumed a timeless and trans-cultural prohibition of homosexual practice. One indication that the prohibition of homosexual relations is a basic moral issue is the fact that the punishment for it is the same as that for adultery (Leviticus 20:10, 13). In the case of a law like the one prohibiting sex during a woman's menstrual period (Leviticus 18:19), the punishment for violation of the law is merely exclusion from the community (Leviticus 20:18). Therefore, we conclude that homosexual practice is, like adultery (Leviticus 20:10), a matter of basic morality, not merely a matter of ritual purity.

Homosexuality and the New Testament

4.b.v. The most significant New Testament text is probably Romans 1:26-27, read in the wider context of 1:18-32. This text regards homosexual practice of both males (men interacting sexually with men) and females as one manifestation of creaturely rebellion against the general revelation of God through the created order. The revisionist reading of the text suggests that what is in view here is merely promiscuous or exploitative sex, but that ignores the fact that the inner logic of the text is that the activity is a rejection of the natural connection to

the opposite sex. If the issue were pederasty or master-slave exploitation, that could be easily explained, but that is not the case here (and these activities would still be forms of homosexual practice even though today we use different terms). Some have argued that Paul would not have been aware of loving same-sex relationships like some of the ones in question today, but Paul was a well-traveled citizen of the Roman world, and there is evidence to indicate that the range of attitudes toward homosexual activity was not that different from the modern western world. [See, for example, Thomas K. Hubbard, ed. *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (University of California Press, 2003); and William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Eerdmans, 2012).]

4.b.vi. The apostle Paul refers to homosexual acts in two other places: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:10. In 1 Corinthians, he uses two terms (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*) to describe the persons in view, the former apparently denoting the passive partner in male homosexual acts, and the latter a more general term derived from the language of the Levitical laws in the Septuagint. The term is compound, describing men who go to bed with men, and is repeated in the second text. In 1 Corinthians, the terms describe one category of persons who will not inherit the kingdom of God, and they stand alongside other terms denoting basic moral evil. In 1 Timothy, the term occurs in a list of violations of the Decalogue, in other words, violations of basic moral law.

Conclusion

5.a. For all the reasons above, we believe that same-sex marriage is rebellion against the order of creation established by God, consistently understood in Scripture to be a violation of moral law. To enter into such a marriage is thus a sinful act, and to facilitate a marriage between two males or two females requires our spiritual leaders to participate in sinful, moral rebellion which is a violation of their conscience and religious freedom. Therefore, Fellowship personnel at national, regional, or local levels will not facilitate or participate in rituals that solemnize homosexual relationships.

5.b. When this policy statement refers to marriage of "one man" and "one woman," those phrases are understood to refer to persons who are biologically male and female from birth. Although Scripture does not address contemporary debates about gender identity directly, we believe that the consistent witness of Scripture calls us to accept our biological identity as given by God. The Bible affirms in many different ways that our essential identity is to be found in our relationship with God, not in our gender or sexual orientation. The creation account, in fact, emphasizes that God created humankind in the "male and female" binary condition. Various biblical texts speak negatively of any attempt to portray oneself as the opposite sex (Deuteronomy 22:5) or to reject standard cultural symbols of maleness and femaleness (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). In the Romans 1 text noted above, Paul argues that the right response to God's general revelation as Creator includes the grateful acceptance of His created order for male and female. We are aware of the reality of gender dysphoria, and we desire to deal compassionately with the persons involved, but we do not believe that such compassion compels us to distinguish between sex and gender or to affirm a desire to reject one's created identity.