

# Proposals

## PROPOSAL 1: Singleness

Chapter 5, Family Standards

**Add the following as a new ¶122.**

### ¶122 Singleness

Scripture affirms singleness. Some people experience singleness as a calling. Others experience singleness as a result of the circumstances of life. From Scripture, we understand the following:

1. Neither marriage nor sexual intimacy is essential for wholeness. All persons find wholeness in Christ alone (Galatians 2:20).
2. Jesus and Paul, both single adults, spoke of the advantages of singleness in order to serve God without distraction (Matthew 19:12, I Corinthians 7:32ff).
3. It is not good for humans to be alone (Genesis 2:18, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Psalm 68:6a, Hebrews 10:25). Therefore, the Church must function as the family of God, providing space for all people, especially singles, to find companionship and to pursue their calling (Matthew 12:48-50, Ephesians 2:19-22).

## PROPOSAL 2: Marriage

Chapter 5, Family Standards, current ¶122

### Current Statement

#### ¶122 Marriage

Marriage was instituted by God and is regulated by him. For this reason, the Church must resist all attempts to alter marriage from what the Bible has revealed about it. The purpose of marriage is companionship between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18) in a permanent relationship which can end only when one of the partners dies.

A Christian should marry only another Christian (1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14). Their relationship is to express God's original intention for marriage: the wife's role alongside her husband as an equal.

Because God ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and himself, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA will only recognize marriages between a genetic, biological man and a genetic, biological woman. Further, the ministers classified with the authority to conduct weddings shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one genetic, biological man and one genetic, biological woman. Finally, the facilities and property of churches in covenant with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA shall only host weddings between one genetic, biological man and one genetic, biological woman.

**Revise as follows. Changes indicated with bold and strikethrough.**

**¶123 Marriage**

Marriage was instituted by God and is regulated by him. For this reason, the Church must resist all attempts to alter marriage from what the Bible has revealed about it.

**God ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and himself.** The purpose of marriage is companionship between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18) in a permanent relationship which ends when one of the partners dies. **The marriage relationship reflects the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22ff). It is out of the marriage relationship that God intended for children to be produced and nurtured.**

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~~Finally, the~~ Facilities and property of churches in covenant with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA shall only host weddings between one genetic, biological man and one genetic, biological woman.

**It will then read as follows:**

Marriage was instituted by God and is regulated by him. For this reason, the Church must resist all attempts to alter marriage from what the Bible has revealed about it.

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Facilities and property of churches in covenant with the Church of the United Brethren in Christ USA shall only host weddings between one genetic, biological man and one genetic, biological woman.

## PROPOSAL 3: Illicit Sexual Relations

Chapter 5, Family Standards, current ¶124

### Current Statement

#### ¶124 Illicit Sexual Relations

The biblical view of sex firmly establishes it within the framework of marriage and family life. Therefore, the church cannot condone premarital sex, adultery, or any form of homosexual behavior (I Corinthians 6:9-10). All are clearly contrary to the expressed will of God concerning the union of man and woman together in this most sacred and binding of human relationships (Romans 1:20-32; Deuteronomy 22:23-27).

### Revised as follows.

#### ¶125 Illicit Sexual Relations (Revised; changes in bold)

~~—The biblical view of sex firmly establishes it within the framework of marriage and family life. Therefore, the church cannot condone premarital sex, adultery, or any form of homosexual behavior (I Corinthians 6:9-10).~~

**The Bible firmly establishes sex within the framework of marriage. This design must not be:**

- 1. Substituted (e.g. pornography).**
- 2. Duplicated (e.g. adultery, polygamy).**
- 3. Pre-empted (e.g. premarital sex, cohabitation).**
- 4. Altered (e.g. same-sex relations).**
- 5. Coerced (e.g. sexual assault, abuse).**
- 6. Exploited (e.g. pedophilia, sex trafficking).**
- 7. Corrupted (e.g. non-human sexual relations).**

All are clearly contrary to the expressed will of God concerning the union of man and woman together in this most sacred and binding of human relationships (**I Corinthians 6:9-10**; Romans 1:20-32; Deuteronomy 22:23-27).

## PROPOSAL 4: Sex and Gender Distinctions

Chapter 5, Family Standards

**Insert the following as a new ¶126**

### ¶126 Sex and Gender Distinctions

#### 1. Created in the Image of God

a. All human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The imbue ment of the im- age of God within a human person is not dependent upon that person's sex; God created male and female in his image.

b. Because of the fall, God's perfect created order for humans has become disordered in various ways (Genesis 3, Romans 6:12-18). This affects every aspect of human experience: sexual, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual.

c. Even in the midst of sexual or biological disorder, all humans bear the image of their Creator.

d. Each person should strive to glorify God as one made in his image and according to his de- sign. Such a commitment will lead to eternal rewards, but may also involve temporary suffering.

#### 2. Intersex Persons

a. Individuals whose biological sex is unclear (because at birth their genetic sex does not match their physical sex-related characteristics or they possess physical characteristics of both male and female) are known as intersex persons.

b. It is being created in God's image that defines humanity. This reaches far beyond sexuality to encompass every aspect of the human soul. Neither maleness nor femaleness is equivalent to the image of God.

c. The Church should affirm all persons equally as image bearers of God. This does not mean abandoning the idea of sexual distinctiveness among humans, but recognizes that even in the midst of sexual or biological disorder, all humans bear the image of their Creator.

d. The Church should support and encourage intersex persons as co-image bearers to live in holiness and to follow Christ in a way that brings honor and glory to God.

### 3. Transgender Persons

- a. Persons who struggle with gender identity experience within themselves the suffering that comes when God's good work of creating the human mind and body is disordered as the result of the Fall.
- b. Only in Christ can persons struggling with gender identity experience reconciliation between mind and body.
- c. A person may not experience perfect reconciliation between mind and body in this life. However, God may work through an individual's gender identity struggle for his glory (II Corinthians 12:7-9).
- d. Those who struggle with gender identity suffer along with all believers while waiting for our glorified bodies (I Corinthians 15:42-44). The Church needs to come alongside them and collectively strive to be oriented toward the triune God, in whose image each person is created.
- e. The Church must guard against any attempt to demean or trivialize individual suffering related to struggle with gender identity.
- f. The Church cannot celebrate or support the choice to alter one's sex or gender, because this harms individual identity.
- g. God created humankind male and female. A distinction between the sexes needs to be honored and maintained, even as specific gendered behavior and characteristics may vary from one culture to another.
- h. Gender dysphoria is experienced when a person struggles with gender identity. It may exist at different levels of severity in different persons. Those suffering from gender dysphoria need to confide in their brothers and sisters in Christ and seek competent Christian counseling when appropriate. Persons addressing their own gender dysphoria need to understand the importance of God's order and design for human sexuality and exercise discretion and care when deciding how to live faithfully in the midst of a very real inner struggle.
- i. Believers who may not experience this particular hardship need to take care to manifest the fruit of the Spirit when interacting with persons who do, both within and outside of the Church, encouraging them to find their ultimate identity in Christ.
- j. The Church must compassionately minister to those struggling with sexual identity issues by becoming a place of understanding, healing, and hope. The Church must affirm the value of individuals who are struggling while pointing them to Christ, the healer of all brokenness.

## PROPOSAL 5: The Local Congregation and Human Sexuality

Chapter 5, Family Standards

**Insert the following as a new ¶127**

### ¶127 The Local Congregation and Human Sexuality

1. All persons, irrespective of physicality, gender, or sexual orientation, are made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, a congregation should focus on:

- a. Honoring all persons as created human beings who are deeply loved by God.
- b. Extending hospitality to all persons who are drawn to its public gatherings.

2. All persons have been wounded in their sexuality and are in need of the full redemption of Christ. God desires that human beings live in loving, committed, life-giving, healing relationships in all aspects of life. Therefore, a congregation should focus on:

- a. The redemption and wholeness of all persons.
- b. The healing of relationships.

3. All persons can be tempted to use other people for their own sexual desires, contrary to the loving will of God. Therefore, out of honor for God and each other, a congregation should focus on:

- a. Encouraging the creation and maintenance of healthy, biblical sexual boundaries.
- b. Recognizing that celibacy can be a more radical, sacrificial expression of love than sexual intimacy.

4. All persons need opportunity for safety and authenticity. It is hypocritical to judge the sins of others while failing to acknowledge our own. Therefore, a congregation should focus on:

- a. Protecting each other from harm, particularly when we are in each other's care.
- b. Healing those who have been abused.
- c. Redeeming perpetrators of abuse.

## PROPOSAL 6: Pornography

Chapter 5, Family Standards

**Replace the current statement on Pornography, ¶145 in the “Social Standards” chapter, and insert it as a new ¶129 in the “Family Standards” chapter.**

### Current statement

#### ¶ 145 Pornography

The distribution of pornographic material in various media is one of the causes of the moral decline of our nation. We encourage our local churches to take an active part in any local movement to eliminate the distribution of pornographic material in their respective communities. In case there is no such movement in their communities, we encourage our local churches to take the initiative in carefully and prayerfully organizing such a movement.

### Replace with the following.

#### ¶129 Pornography

1. Pornography is a sin that is deeply damaging to individuals, relationships, and society. All members are to abstain from using pornography.
2. We oppose the use of pornography for these reasons:
  - a. Sex is a unique and wonderful gift from God that is to be experienced, expressed, and enjoyed within the context of a lifelong marriage covenant (Genesis 2:22-24, Matthew 19:4-6).
  - b. Sexual nakedness was never meant to be observed except within the context of marriage (Genesis 9:22-23, Exodus 28:42, Leviticus 18:6-18, Habakkuk 2:15).
  - c. Pornography removes sex from its proper context by creating arousal apart from marriage.
  - d. Pornography fuels the sin of lust (Matthew 5:27-28, Job 31:1).
  - e. Pornography substitutes self-gratification for the relational intimacy and self-giving inherent in the sexual act.
  - f. Pornography is destructive to marriages and families.
  - g. Pornography contributes to such systemic social ills as the abuse and objectification of people made in the image of God.
  - h. Pornography funds and encourages the sex trade industry.
3. Those struggling with pornography or an addiction to sexually explicit materials should seek help through the counsel of Christian therapists as well as the support and accountability of fellow followers of Christ (James 5:16).
4. Church leaders are urged to teach on the dangers of pornography and to create avenues to help Christians who are struggling with pornography (Galatians 6:1-3).