Beech Grove Baptist Church of Blount County, Tennessee, Incorporated

Church Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality

Introduction

This is a policy statement on the beliefs of the Beech Grove Baptist Church of Blount County, Tennessee, Incorporated (the Church) regarding religious beliefs concerning marriage and human sexuality and our policies based upon the necessary application of our faith to life and practice.

What We Believe About Marriage and Human Sexuality

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. This idea is supported for example by the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Genesis 1:26-28 provides that God created man in His own image, both male and female. The passage implies that a unity of one man and one woman is in some way necessary to fully represent the image of God in mankind.

Genesis chapter 2 provides a more detailed account in which God created the first man, Adam, and decided that it was not good for him to be alone. (Genesis 2:18). God indicated that He would make “a suitable helper for him.” God brought all of the animals to Adam, but none of them was a suitable helper for him, so God then created Eve, the first woman, from part of Adam himself. God did not create a second man to be Adam’s helpmate, or an assortment of multiple women, but rather one woman. Together they were man and wife and had “no shame” or sin in their union with each other. (Genesis 2:15-25).

Jesus Christ reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6, “Haven’t you read, he replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

The Apostle Paul states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution, but is a special divine metaphor that is supposed to illustrate the union of Christ and the Church. For this reason also, only a union between a man and a woman can be a proper marriage because a union between two men, two women, or one man and multiple women or any collection of people could not properly illustrate the relationship between Christ and His Church.

1st Corinthians 6:9-11 condemns a variety of lifestyles including those associated with adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality. The Bible condemns all forms of sexual immorality and encourages Christians to flee from it because of its destructive effects, and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1st Corinthians 3:16 & 6:12-20).

Romans 1:18-32 makes it clear that it is not only sinful to engage in homosexual unions, but also to approve of such sins in others or encourage their practice. As a result, in order to maintain our consistent Christian witness, we cannot sanction, approve, or promote in any way adultery, fornication (a sexual relationship between an unmarried man and woman; i.e. “living together”), pornography, pedophilia, polygamy, bestiality, or homosexual unions. This is made clear also by countless other verses throughout the Old Testament as well as by these and other passages in the New Testament.

Our Church follows what the Bible reveals as the "sure foundation" of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29 and 1st Corinthians 14:37). The Church is called to teach and practice these teachings and is not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority if it is to authentically bear the name "Christian." Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as marriage we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22).

Sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, polygamy and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church. Lewd conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation, distribution or viewing of pornography is incompatible with God’s intention.

Our Bible Based Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality

As a result of these above described religious beliefs and our belief in the need for a practice of fidelity to these beliefs, it is our policy that the facilities of this Church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex union or a polygamist or any union which, in the judgment of the Church, is inconsistent with our beliefs. It is also the policy of the Church that no pastor or member of the Church staff shall officiate at any ceremony designed to solemnize, promote, create, or approve of such a union, nor may any member of the Church enter into such a union without being subject to Church discipline.

A civil government’s sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the Church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Church policy statement.

Church Policy Regarding Sexuality

Recognizing that we all struggle with sin, this Church will provide an environment that welcomes people who struggle with sexual sin. We will seek to love all people in Jesus' name, pointing them towards Christ's power to forgive and heal. While the Bible teaches that those who engage in sexual sin, sin against their own body, we also recognize that sexual sin is not characterized in Scripture as being more severe than other forms of sin. We will seek God to discern ways that we can directly and indirectly minister and share God's love with those who struggle with every kind of sin. We also recognize that there is a difference between temptation and behavior, and while temptation is sometimes unavoidable, we are responsible for our behavior.

Church Practices Derived from This Policy

Clergy:

1. Ordained clergy, licensed ministers, and all other persons employed by the Church shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality.
2. Only ordained or duly licensed clergy approved by the senior pastor and a majority of the active deacons of this Church shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on Church property.
3. Clergy employed by the Church shall be subject to dismissal for violating this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality or by officiating at a marriage ceremony that violates the letter or the spirit of this policy.

Applicants for Weddings Performed on Church Property:

1. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of the clergy employed by the Church, or clergy or judiciary approved by the senior pastor and a majority of the active deacons of this Church, or to use the Church facilities for their wedding, shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent herewith.
2. Applicants shall participate in premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by this Church or other persons who, in the opinion of the pastoral staff of the Church have the appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling. All pastoral staff, counselors or other persons providing premarital counseling shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality.

Use of Facilities:

1. Any marriage performed on Church premises shall be officiated by an

ordained or duly licensed member of the clergy or judiciary. Any officiant not employed by this Church shall serve at the discretion of the senior pastor and a majority of the active deacons of the Church.
2. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on Church premises, whether or not employed by the Church, shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this Church and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent herewith.
3. Clergy and staff assigned by the Church to implement the procedures contained in this policy statement will decline to provide Church facilities for, and/or decline to officiate at a ceremony when in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

Membership, Leadership, Staff and Members:

1. Every minister and employee, hired by the Church shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent herewith.
2. Church officers shall affirm in writing their agreement with this Church policy on marriage and human sexuality and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent herewith.
3. Church leaders, teachers and members are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with this Church policy statement on marriage and human sexuality.

Other Policies of the Church Pertaining to Marriage and Human Sexuality

The Church has also adopted other policies in addition to this one that also apply to marriage and human sexuality, which include, but are not limited to, the Church Wedding Policy and the Church Facilities Usage Policy which provide additional requirements and responsibilities.

We have read this policy and agree to all the provisions herein.

Signed on this____ day of _____, 20

Printed Name Signature

Printed Name Signature

Church Representative Name Signature