**Church Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality**

1. **Introduction**

This is a policy statement regarding religious beliefs of the Faith Fellowship Cumberland Presbyterian Church (CPC) concerning marriage and human sexuality and our strategies based upon the necessary application of our CPC Confession of Faith.

Reference: [Statement from 1996 General Assembly on Homosexuality (page](http://www.cumberland.org/gao/confession/GA_StatementHomosexuality.pdf) 5)

1. **What We Believe About Marriage and Human Sexuality**

Chapter 6 in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Confession of Faith, titled, *Christians Live and Witness in the World,* has a subsection dealing with marriage, “Marriage and the Family”, which states:

6.17 Marriage is between a man and a woman for the mutual benefit of each, their children, and society. While marriage is subject to the appropriate civil law, it is primarily a covenant relationship under God. As such, it symbolizes the relationship of Jesus Christ and the church, and is that human relationship in which love and trust are best known.

6.18 As a covenant relationship under God, marriage is a lifetime commitment, and should not be taken lightly.

6.19 Because marriage is primarily a covenant relationship under God, between a man and a woman, it is morally wrong and unlawful for any person to have more than one living marriage partner.

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 is intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. This idea is supported 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, the fully divine and fully human incarnation of God, reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament (Genesis 2:24) 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, writing authoritatively under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, 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 reflect the relationship between Christ and His Church.

I 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. (I Corinthians 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, pornography, pedophilia, polyamory~~1~~, 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 I 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 and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Lewd conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation or distribution or viewing of pornography is incompatible with God’s intention.

1. **Our Faith-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 (Faith Fellowship Cumberland Presbyterian 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 polyamorist union, a union which is of too close an affiliation of blood according to biblical standards (Leviticus 18:1-18), or any union which, in the judgment of the Elders, in some way constitutes child abuse. 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 the CPC Confession of Faith.

1. **Clergy**

Ordained clergy or licensed ministers employed by the church shall agree with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by Faith Fellowship CPC (FFCPC).

Only duly ordained clergy or licensed ministers approved by this church session shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.

Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal for violating this statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality or by officiating at a marriage ceremony that violates the letter or the spirit of this policy.

1. **Applicants for Weddings Performed by Church Staff**

Applicants shall meet with clergy or counselors employed by this church or other persons who, in the sole 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 the statement of faith of this church on marriage and human sexuality.

1. **Use of Facilities**

Any marriage performed on church premises shall be officiated by an ordained or duly licensed member of the clergy. Any officiant not employed by Faith Fellowship CP Church shall serve at the discretion of the FFCPC pastor or Church Session.

Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Clergy and staff assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his or her discretion, 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.

1. **Membership, Leadership and Staff**

Every minister, Elder, and church employee shall affirm in writing their agreement with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Church leaders, teachers and members are expected to teach and live in a manner that is consistent with this policy.

**IN 1996 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY (General Assembly Minutes, page 313)**

Whereas, in our society today, there are many issues which concern the people of God, one such issue being the rise in acceptance of and openness toward homosexual activity, and we, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, believe there is a need to state clearly our understanding of the Biblical teaching about homosexual activity, and

Whereas, it is also our desire to set forth our position regarding the appropriate response of Christians and the church to this critical issue, especially in light of the trend in some Christian bodies toward the ordination of practicing homosexuals, and

Whereas we believe the scripture of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God, the source of authority for faith and practice, and therefore, contemporary sexual attitudes and behavior are to be judged in the light of the Bible rather than the Bible being reinterpreted, modified, or overturned by current cultural trends in thought and behavior,

Be it resolved that the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church go on record affirming that Biblical teaching makes it clear that the practice of homosexuality is a sin, yet with the understanding that while God loves the sinner, He hates the sin, and His grace is available to all, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him" John3:17

Be it further resolved, that since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with a Christian life style and since officers of the church must be "examples to the flock" the General Assembly go on record stating that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church does not condone the ordination of practicing homosexuals as Deacons, Elders or Ministers of Word and Sacrament; and

Be it further resolved, that the General Assembly state as its position that we, as Christians who are ourselves sinners redeemed by the grace of God, must reach out to those persons who are struggling with homosexuality, offering them Christian love, education, friendship, therapy and intercession to the end that they and we may experience true wholeness through the freeing, renewing grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This statement is to be understood as a theological and social statement and not to be understood as a rule or principle for ordination but never to usurp the authority of presbytery or session to ordain.