

**“From the Beginning”: God’s Design for Marriage**  
*A statement from the Anglican Church in North America*

The Archbishop and Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America have received the recent ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States of America and are deeply grieved by the stark departure from God’s revealed order. We are concerned for the inevitable results from this action to change the legal understanding of marriage and family life.

While this decision grieves us, God’s truth and the goodness of the order established in creation have not been changed. The kingdom of God cannot be shaken. We pray with confidence that God will reveal his glory, love, goodness, and hope to the world through his Church as we seek to follow him in faith and obedience.

Jesus Christ teaches that God is the author of marriage from the beginning of time (Matthew 19:4-6). God’s design for marriage has always involved a man and a woman: “a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). These truths have ordered civilization for thousands of years. Where God’s designs are followed in any society, including his designs for marriage and families, the result is the greatest possible blessing and abundance of life.

The Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is often summarized as, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Because of his love, we love and care for all those who experience same-sex attraction. The Anglican Church in North America continues to welcome everyone to experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

Marriage is established by God for the procreation and raising of children and for the good of society. For this reason, governments have an interest in marriage and have delegated authority from God to protect and regulate it. But no court, no legislature and no local magistrate has the authority to redefine marriage and to impose this definition on their citizens.

The United States of America, so its founders believed and taught, is a nation under God whose citizens’ fundamental rights are derived from the Creator. There is no right to a relationship which is contrary to the Creator’s express design. We cannot accept the Supreme Court’s decision purporting to find a fundamental right to same-sex “marriage” any more than we can accept its claim to have found a right to destroy human life in the womb. We will work with others to overturn this decision, and we pray that others will join with us in this effort.

Meeting this week in Vancouver, British Columbia, we are reminded that our Canadian members have been living under a similar legal standard for the last ten years. Their situation includes minimal legal protections for those who in good conscience cannot

recognize this redefinition, and it is our prayer that stronger protections will be put into place and honored in the United States.

In the meantime, we shall continue to exercise our religious freedom to perform marriages for those who come for holy matrimony as defined by our Church. The Anglican Church in North America only authorizes and only performs marriages between one man and one woman. We respect the consciences of those clergy who may decline to perform marriages as agents of the state. We ask our churches to respect such decisions and help make arrangements to minister to those seeking to be married. We are also well aware that this ruling may create difficulties for our lay members and Christian institutions as they seek to be faithful in upholding God's design for marriage, and we will make every effort to find ways to support and stand with them.

The Church bears witness to the truth of God's Word and God's design of marriage (see attached statement on "Bearing Witness"). When government oversteps its rightful authority, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Today there is no place for either triumphalism or despair, so we prayerfully and sincerely urge a spirit of charity by all. We speak out of a concern for the consequences that our people and our neighbors will suffer from an unjust and unwise decision by five justices of the Supreme Court. We call those justices to repentance, even as we echo Jesus' words, praying for God the Father to forgive them, for they know not what they have done.

We call our people to a season of prayer for marriage and offer the accompanying Litany and Prayer to guide us.

*Unanimously adopted by the College of Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America.  
June 26, 2015*

### **A Litany for Marriage**

We thank you, heavenly Father, for graciously creating us in your image, male and female, and for ordaining that a man and woman shall be joined as one flesh in the covenant of marriage.

*We thank you, O Father.*

We thank you for the gift and heritage of children and for placing them in homes which may be havens of blessing and peace.

*We thank you, O Father.*

We thank you for the love between fathers and mothers and sons and daughters that binds together the generations and undergirds our country's social fabric.

*We thank you, O Father.*

Lord Jesus Christ, divine Bridegroom, we repent for all the situations in which we have dishonored the covenant of marriage through selfishness or unfaithfulness.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

We repent as a Church where we have failed to prepare our children for holy matrimony, or to care for those who are widowed, divorced or single.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

We repent whereas citizens we have become complacent and neglected the defense of marriage in the public square.

*Lord, have mercy upon us.*

We pray you, Holy Spirit, to restore marriage to its due honor in our country and to revive our marriages and families as emblems of your love.

*Deliver us by your grace and power.*

We pray you to strengthen our bishops and other leaders as they join with faithful churches to make a strong God-honoring defense of your design for marriage.

*Deliver us by your grace and power.*

We pray you to have mercy on those who have promoted false teaching about marriage and on those who have been led astray and harmed by it.

*Deliver us by your grace and power.*

Grant us courage, O Triune God, to hold fast to the truth of your Word, and give grace to those who are counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ.

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

### **A Prayer for Marriage**

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you have created us male and female in your image and have ordained that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. Look down in mercy, we pray, on our families, our church and our nation. Knit together in constant affection those who, in Holy Matrimony, have been made one flesh. Turn the hearts of the parents to the children, the hearts of the children to the parents, and the hearts of all to those who are single or alone. Finally, grant that your Church may steadfastly defend the unchangeable bond of marriage which embodies the mystery of Christ’s love for us; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**Suggested Hymns:** “O God of Earth and Altar”; “God of Grace and God of Glory”

## **Bearing Witness to Holy Matrimony**

*The following statement is intended to make clear the position of the Anglican Church in North America with regard to the nature of marriage.*

### **THE SCRIPTURE BEARS WITNESS**

The Anglican Church in North America grounds its doctrine and discipline on the authority of the Bible as God’s word written (Constitution, Art. 1.1). The Bible from beginning to end is clear and consistent in its teaching about marriage. The following passages testify to the essential character of marriage as a faithful lifelong union of a man and a woman.

#### **Human Nature in the Image of God**

**Genesis 1:27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

#### **God’s Design of Marriage and Family**

**Genesis 1:28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

#### **Jesus’ Affirmation of Lifelong Monogamous Marriage**

**Mark 10:7-9** [Jesus said,] “‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

#### **The Mutual Love of Husbands and Wives Based in Christ’s Love for the Church**

**Ephesians 5:24-27** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

#### **The Sanctity of Marriage**

**Hebrews 13:4** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

### **THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA BEARS WITNESS**

The Anglican Church in North America bears witness to the biblical and traditional teaching

concerning marriage in its Constitution and Canons (2012) and in its Catechism (2014). This teaching is in agreement with the historic Anglican tradition of the Book of Common Prayer (1662), the Lambeth Conferences of Anglican Bishops, and the Jerusalem Declaration of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (2008).

## **CONSTITUTION AND CANONS (2009, 2012)**

### ***Article I: Fundamental Declarations of the Province***

As the Anglican Church in North America (the Province), being a part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, we believe and confess Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no one comes to the Father but by Him. Therefore, we identify the following seven elements as characteristic of the Anglican Way, and essential for membership:

1. We confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, containing all things necessary for salvation, and to be the final authority and unchangeable standard for Christian faith and life...

6. We receive The Book of Common Prayer as set forth by the Church of England in 1662, together with the Ordinal attached to the same, as a standard for Anglican doctrine and discipline, and, with the Books which preceded it, as the standard for the Anglican tradition of worship.

In all these things, the Anglican Church in North America is determined by the help of God to hold and maintain, as the Anglican Way has received them, the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ and to transmit the same, unimpaired, to our posterity.

We seek to be and remain in full communion with all Anglican Churches, Dioceses and Provinces that hold and maintain the Historic Faith, Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

### ***Canon II. 7: Of Christian Marriage***

The Anglican Church in North America affirms our Lord's teaching that the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong of one man and one woman. (Section 1)

Members of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the Canons of this Church governing the solemnization of Holy Matrimony. (Section 3)

As marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman in which the two become one flesh, it is both an ordinance of Creation, affirmed as such by our Lord, and commended by Saint Paul as a sign of the mystical union between Christ and His Church (Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-32). (Section 4)

The Clergy shall require the parties to sign the following declaration:

*“We, A. B. and C. D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. We believe it is for the purpose of the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their spiritual and physical nurture, for mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God’s help thereto.  
(Section 6)*

### **Canon II.8: Of Standards of Sexual Morality and Ethics**

In view of the teaching of Holy Scripture, the Lambeth Conference of 1998 and the Jerusalem Declaration, this Church upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage, and cannot legitimize or bless same sex unions or ordain persons who engage in homosexual behavior. Sexual intercourse should take place only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (Section 2)

### **TO BE A CHRISTIAN: AN ANGLICAN CATECHISM (Anglican Church in North America 2014)**

#### **128. What is marriage?**

Marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, binding both to self-giving love and exclusive fidelity. In the rite of Christian marriage, the couple exchange vows to uphold this covenant. They do this before God and in the presence of witnesses, who pray that God will bless their life together. (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19; Mark 10:2-9; Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39)

#### **129. What is signified in marriage?**

The covenantal union of man and woman in marriage signifies the communion between Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, and the Church, his holy bride. Not all are called to marriage, but all Christians are wedded to Christ and blessed by the grace God gives in marriage. (Ephesians 5:31-32)

#### **130. What grace does God give in marriage?**

In Christian marriage, God establishes and blesses the covenant between husband and wife, and joins them to live together in a communion of love, faithfulness and peace within the fellowship of Christ and his Church. God enables all married people to grow in love, wisdom and godliness through a common life patterned on the sacrificial love of Christ.

### **THE ANGLICAN BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER BEARS WITNESS**

As noted in the Constitution (I.6), the Anglican Church in North America recognizes the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as its standard for worship. This Prayer Book defines Holy Matrimony as follows:

DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men..."

It goes on to state three purposes of holy matrimony

First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.

Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

This definition is in full accord with the biblical witness and is consistent with the canons and catechism of the Anglican Church in North America.

### **THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE OF ANGLICAN BISHOPS BEARS WITNESS**

The Lambeth Conference of Bishops has borne witness consistently on the subject of marriage at its decennial meetings over the past 150 years. Several examples of this teaching are as follows:

#### **1920**

Recognising that to live a pure and chaste life before and after marriage is, for both sexes, the unchangeable Christian standard, attainable and attained through the help of the Holy Spirit by men and women in every age, the Conference desires to proclaim the universal obligation of this standard, and its vital importance as an essential condition of human happiness. (Resolution 66)

The Conference affirms as our Lord's principle and standard of marriage a life-long and indissoluble union, for better or worse, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, and calls on all Christian people to maintain and bear witness to this standard. (Resolution 67)

#### **1948**

Faced with the great increase in the number of broken marriages and the tragedy of children deprived of true home life, this Conference desires again to affirm that marriage always entails a life-long union and obligation; it is convinced that upon the faithful observance of this divine law depend the stability of home life, the welfare and happiness of children, and the real health of society. It calls upon members of the Church and others to do their utmost by word and example to uphold the sanctity of the marriage bond and to

counteract those influences which tend to destroy it. It is convinced that maintenance of the Church's standard of discipline can alone meet the deepest needs of men; and it earnestly implores those whose marriage, perhaps through no fault of their own, is unhappy to remain steadfastly faithful to their marriage vows. (Resolution 92)

### **1998**

This Conference:

- in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage.
- recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions. (Resolution I.10)

### **THE GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP OF CONFESSING ANGLICANS BEARS WITNESS**

In June 2008, 280 Anglican bishops held a special "Global Anglican Future Conference" in Jerusalem. This Conference adopted the Jerusalem Declaration, which reaffirms the biblical and historic standards of Anglicanism and states:

We acknowledge God's creation of humankind as male and female and the unchangeable standard of Christian marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family. We repent of our failures to maintain this standard and call for a renewed commitment to lifelong fidelity in marriage and abstinence for those who are not married. (Clause 8)

The Conference led to the formation of the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, to which the Anglican Church in North America was admitted in 2009 as a full member.

### **ECUMENICAL STATEMENTS BEAR WITNESS**

The Anglican Church in North America is party to a wider fellowship of Christian churches that share its biblical understanding of Holy Matrimony. The Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America has borne witness by signing several recent ecumenical statements on the nature of marriage:



“The Two Shall Become One Flesh: Reclaiming Christian Marriage” by Evangelicals and Catholics Together (March 2015) endorsed by the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America along with more than thirty Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders. Available at [www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/the-two-shall-become-one-flesh-reclaiming-marriage-2](http://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/03/the-two-shall-become-one-flesh-reclaiming-marriage-2).

“An Affirmation of Marriage” by Anglican Church in North America, Lutheran Church-Canada, North American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (May 2013). Available at <http://thenalc.org/the-nalc-releases-ecumenical-affirmation-on-marriage/>

“The Defense of Marriage and the Right of Religious Freedom: Reaffirming a Shared Witness: An Open Letter from Religious Leaders to All in Positions of Public Service” (April 2015), signed by the current and former Archbishops of the Anglican Church in North America, along with ecumenical leaders from the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches, as well as representatives of the Mormon, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/upload/Open-Letter-on-Marriage-and-Religious-Freedom-April-2015.pdf>

“Pledge in Solidarity to Defend Marriage” signed by the Archbishop along with Christian leaders and 55,000 others (and counting). Available at <http://defendmarriage.org/pledge-in-solidarity-to-defend-marriage>