

Marriage, Sexuality & Civil Unions Policy

Of Taupo Baptist Church

Taupo, New Zealand

1. THE BIBLE

1.1 We begin by affirming our unequivocal belief in “The inspiration of the Bible and its authority in all matters of faith and practice”. (First point in the Articles of Faith as set out in the Baptist Union Act of Incorporation 1923.)

1.2 We affirm that the incarnate Word (Jesus) and the written Word (the Bible) are of one accord and cannot be separated.

1.3 We affirm that the Bible, which includes the teachings of Jesus, has an overall clarity in its teaching on marriage and sexual morality which can be summarised as “celibacy in singleness, faithfulness in marriage, marriage to be defined as a union between one man and one woman.”

2. SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

2.1 We affirm that God made human beings as sexual beings, and that human sexuality is God's good gift to us.

2.2 We affirm that marriage is the legal, moral and spiritual union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.

2.3 We affirm that God intended marriage to be a partnership, in which husband and wife love, honour and respect each other, and that this is the biblical context for sexual intimacy.

2.4 We affirm that sexual intimacy between husband and wife is

good, and is intended by God for bonding, pleasure and procreation.

2.5 We affirm that marriage, between one man and one woman, is the ideal and God-intended context in which to conceive and rear children.

2.6 We affirm that the Church ought to do all in its power to uphold the importance and sanctity of marriage as a loving, life-long union between one man and one woman.

2.7 We acknowledge that in this broken world, distortions can occur in the expression of human sexuality, and we affirm our concern and love for those who are in situations of distortions or brokenness. However, such distortions should not be viewed as acceptable or embraced as being good.

3. HOMOSEXUALITY

3.1 We first affirm that the biblical ideal for sexual relationships is within a permanent monogamous, heterosexual union. Because of this biblical teaching, we hold that heterosexual marriage is foundational to both family and society, and we believe that this pattern, ordained by God at creation, must be upheld.

3.2 We believe that homosexual expression clearly departs from this biblical pattern and is condemned in scripture. We therefore assert that homosexual behaviour is unacceptable in the sight of God, because it is contrary to scriptural principles of morality and family life. Accordingly we see homosexual practice as sinful.

3.3 However, we also see condemnation and rejection of the homosexual person as sinful. We do not put homosexuals into a special class of “sinner”, but see them, like heterosexuals, as people having to deal

with their orientation and sexual pilgrimage towards a fulfilling and self-affirming sexual pattern as God intended. We need to bear in mind, all humans are sinners, and biblical teaching condemns, for instance, greed and materialism just as strongly as homosexual behaviour.

3.4 We affirm God's love for both the homosexual and the heterosexual who struggle to discover God's purpose in their sexuality. We believe that whatever one's orientation or behaviour, the liberating, healing and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit is available to each of us.

3.5 As a family of churches we have sought, and will continue to minister God's love and forgiveness to the homosexual person. We will work through ministry, prayer, counselling, companionship, and with compassion to facilitate liberation for the homosexual. As an outcome of the above, we neither endorse nor promote same-sex marriage. Instead we reaffirm our statement that the biblical ideal for sexual relationships is within a permanent monogamous, heterosexual union.

4. MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

4.1 The Pastoral Staff (or Senior Pastor) are given authority to accept requests for marriage ceremonies to be held in our premises and with due pastoral care determine for whom they will make themselves available for the conducting of such ceremonies.

5. CIVIL UNIONS

5.1 Given the above we cannot condone the practice of civil unions and will not allow the use of our church premises or properties for such ceremonies.

6. SAME SEX MARRIAGES

6.1 Given the above, we cannot condone the practice of same-sex marriage and will not allow the use of our church premises or properties for such ceremonies.

7. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THOSE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

7.1 We articulate these standards and affirm our belief that they need to be maintained by all Christians, particularly those in pastoral leadership, because they have been placed in positions of trust within Taupo Baptist Church. (We also do it to clarify the meaning of “improper conduct” in regard to marriage and sexuality, which is a reason for suspension from the Official List, under the section on “The Ministry” in the Constitution and Rules of the Baptist Union of New Zealand.)

7.2 We affirm that Taupo Baptist Church is right to set and maintain high standards for those who are called and appointed into positions of leadership and ministry (James 3:1).

7.3 We affirm that it is inappropriate to accept into pastoral ministry within Taupo Baptist Church those who are involved, or have been involved in, pedophilia, adultery or fornication, pornography or practicing homosexuality and remain unrepentant.

7.4 We affirm the Baptist Union policy (Addendum 4: Dealing with Ministers Guilty of Immorality) as the policy that will be used in dealing with any pastoral staff at Taupo Baptist who are guilty of immorality.