

A STATEMENT FOLLOWING GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2016

Following this year's General Assembly vote to extend the decision made in 2015 regarding the ordination of those in Civil Partnerships to now include those in same-sex Marriages, as the Presbytery of Lewis, we want to further address members and adherents within the bounds and beyond.

We want to strongly underline two parallel convictions.

First, that we are greatly saddened and gravely concerned about the Kirk's further departure from and rejection of God's clearly revealed will in Scripture. We unanimously and in the strongest of terms disagree with the decisions that have been made at the General Assemblies of both 2015 and 2016. We view these decisions concerning the ordination and induction of those in same-sex relationships as an unequivocal rejection of God's will as revealed in Scripture.

We want to categorically reaffirm and reassert our commitment to the Bible's teaching on marriage. It is clear from the first pages of Scripture that Marriage was given by God, and was between one man and one woman. In the Old Testament marriage between a man and a woman is an illustration and motif for God's relationship with His people; and in the New Testament, of Christ's relationship with His people, His Church. Biblical marriage therefore runs unchanged from Genesis to Revelation, and will reach its fulfilment when Christ presents His Bride, the Church, at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Biblical marriage was affirmed, attested and strengthened by the Lord Jesus (Matt. 19:4-6). The decisions of this and last year's General Assemblies respectively, to allow those in civil partnerships and same sex marriages to be ordained and inducted within our Church is a clear contradiction of God's intended ideal for humanity.

The Church's decisions at recent General Assemblies to consistently depart from this Biblical position has caused untold pain, suffering and shame. There has also been confusion across the denomination that while the Church of Scotland continues to affirm that it stands by its historic and current doctrine and practice in relation to marriage and human sexuality, this new Act denies this in its practical outworking. In addition, our ecumenical relationships with sister denominations both far and near have been seriously damaged. This has consequences for us all, and ultimately is grievous to Christ, (John [17: 20-22](#)).

We wish to state categorically as a Presbytery therefore that we profoundly disagree with these decisions; that we stand firmly on the Bible's teaching on Marriage, and that we fully identify with the anguish and anger, dismay and shame, among our people and in the wider denomination.

Yet our second conviction is one which we express even more strongly. It is that we believe in a Triune God, and with His enabling grace, we will strive to continue to live by his precepts which are set out in Scripture. We do not believe that God will withdraw His blessing from those who continue to honour His Word, both in pulpit and pew. We are convinced of that, not due to our faithfulness, but because of His great mercy, which triumphs over judgement.

There are those in our parishes who need the Saviour. Our Lord's Great Commission still stands, therefore our calling to go to them remains. We still have God's Word that is alive and active. We have still our parish churches' life and structures to equip us to reach out; and we have an almighty, gracious and merciful God Who promises in John 15:5 to make those who obey and stay close to Him fruitful.

Presbytery therefore encourages its members and adherents:

- i. to make prayer an ongoing priority...for faith, faithfulness and fruitfulness.
- ii. to encourage each other in his Word and in our obedience to it.
- iii. to engage in evangelism, for only the Gospel has the power of God for salvation.

We thrill in the Word: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen". (Ephesians 3: 20,21).*