



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Theological statement on Same-sex Marriage

The position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG) is the largest protestant church in PNG with a membership of two million people, spreading over 17 church districts across the country. About 850 delegates representing the 17 districts of the church, plus guests, visitors and observers met in Ialibu, Immanuel district, from 21st - 26th January 2024 for the 34th synod of ELCPNG.

During the synod we reflected with concern on the issue of same-sex marriage. In the 27th synod in 2010, at the Martin Luther Seminary, Lae, we unanimously resolved that we do not recognize same-sex marriage and we will not support the practice. We distinguish between people who are God's creation and the practice of same-sex marriage as human social construction. Therefore if anyone who enters into this relationship comes to church we cannot reject him or her because we do not hold the keys to heaven but we are called to make God's grace available to anyone who comes to the church to seek God's mercy and forgiveness.

We are compelled by the announcement from the Head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, for Catholic priests to bless same-sex couples. We observed the reactions from various Catholic Bishops from different continents of the world and noted with concern their differed opinions on the issue as a challenge to Christianity. Therefore we feel obliged to respond to the issue of same-sex marriage and make the position of the ELCPNG clear.

We look back on the progress of human civilization which progressively transforms the social world. As a result the quest for human freedom, rights and justice become critical today. Relationship between genders and marriage are reshaped with new ideas and behaviors. Societies are transformed through advance scientific innovations, rapid circularization and globalization which have direct consequences on the institution of marriage, sex and family life. New ways of recreating human life have been developed through science and technology. Sophisticated scientific tools are used to modify God's blueprint of creation through genetic engineering or genetic modification, embryo replication or human cloning, surrogacy or sperm infusion and impregnation through scientific process.

The quest for human freedom, rights and gender equality have also shifted the traditional understanding and ways on human relationship, sex and family life. The more humans have become aware of themselves they seek ways to modify their

physical and biological condition. In the name of freedom and rights they reconstruct their genders and create new trends of relationship between genders and identify themselves as LGBTQ community.

Same sex marriage is accepted in some societies and legalized in some countries. Beyond the issue of same-sex union sex has been commercialized, gender has been modified through hormonal therapy and surgery, and human body has been modified through therapy or other reconstruction techniques. People are recreating their genders, forms, styles and patterns of sex and relationship. We are convinced by this new trends of change to assert that humans have gone beyond the limit of God's blueprint in creation, thus interferes with God's initial design.

While Christianity is confronted with this emerging social dilemma some churches maintain a liberal position and accept the practice and wed or bless same-sex couples while others maintain their conservative tradition and reject the practice and decline to wed or bless same-sex couples in church. Christian churches around the world are divided on the subject. The contrasting views of the churches create confusion and misunderstanding among Christians.

We believe that procreation is a gift of God to humans in marriage. The Genesis narrative of creation presents the union of a male and a female which God blesses as the fundamental institution of humanity. God commanded a male and a female to be fruitful and multiply. Therefore any other means of relationship to achieve this end is against God's will and erodes the dignity and value of man as God designed.

We see the application of science and human culture to modify God's blueprint as unbiblical, unethical and immoral, for it challenges the fundamental principles of God's ordinance in marriage and family life.

We affirm our common responsibility to promote God's will in marriage and procreation. Therefore we reaffirm our position on same-sex marriage that the practice is against God's order of creation and marriage ordinance. Therefore we reject the practice and blessing of same-sex marriage in the church.

We subscribe

Theological Committee

Ampo, 12th January 2024