

APPENDIX – 4
PRELIMINARY POSITION PAPER
HUMAN SEXUALITY

Human Sexuality

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3 In a time when views of human sexuality and marriage are rapidly changing, we believe it is
4 necessary and helpful to state clearly and compassionately to the church and the world our
5 beliefs about God's design for human sexuality. We wish to do so with love toward all as we
6 attempt to imitate God's love for us.¹ We long for Church as well as society to conform to
7 biblical standards of sexuality; but our ultimate desire is that, through the gospel, all may
8 come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and receive His gift of eternal
9 life. We also know that, having come to believe in Him, we enjoy His blessing by walking
10 with Him according to His Word. We believe the Bible to be God's Word and that to
11 understand and obey His will leads to the greatest human flourishing.² what follows what is
12 what we believe the Scriptures teach and the Christian Church has held to be true since the
13 time of the apostles, and what therefore holds the greatest prospects for human happiness
14 and well-being, even as we strive and long for a time when God will make all things new.³

15 16 **The Divine Origin and Purpose of Human Sexuality**

17 Human sexuality is a gift from God. Being made in the likeness of God⁴ as male and female,
18 we reflect the loving complementarity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Scriptures
19 present a grand vision of husband and wife mirroring the intimate fellowship of the Trinity
20 through union with a covenant partner who is both similar (human) and different
21 (opposite gender), leading to fruitful procreation of humanity. In this profound mystery we
22 discover God's purposes for our sexuality and His will for how we are to express our
23 sexuality.⁵

24
25 At the fall of humankind, recorded in Genesis 3, we began to distort and misuse the gifts of
26 God to our own demise, but through His gracious redemptive work in Jesus Christ, God is
27 leading us from brokenness and rebellion to a full and beautiful restoration of our
28 relationship with Him and of our human dignity and purpose.⁶

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31 ¹ 1 John 4:10; John 15:12; 1 John 3:10; Ephesians 5:1-2

32 ² Psalm 1; Matthew 4:4

33 ³ Revelation 21:5

34 ⁴ Genesis 1:27

35 ⁵ Genesis 2:18-25; Song of Songs, Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

36 ⁶ John 10:10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-8

37 Because God made us and redeems us, He alone has sovereign authority to define us and to
 38 regulate our sexual practice. We, therefore, must resist every temptation and renounce
 39 every attempt to subvert God’s purposes and His commandments concerning our sexuality.
 40 At the same time, we, as evangelical Presbyterians, readily and sorrowfully confess our
 41 manifold violations of His Word: as a people, we have engaged in premarital sex, adultery,
 42 ungodly divorce, and sexual lusts of every sort, not only before coming to faith in Christ, but
 43 also afterward. As churches, we have at times sanctioned unbiblical marriages, violating the
 44 expressed will of God revealed in the Scriptures; and we sometimes have self-righteously
 45 condemned others for their sexual sins while committing our own. We stand in need of
 46 God’s forgiveness and of His power to live holy lives. Our churches desperately need revival
 47 and a humble return to godly sexual practice. And so, with humble and repentant hearts,
 48 we return to the Lord, and we invite those both inside and outside the Church to join us in
 49 seeking God’s blessing in our sexual lives.⁷

50
 51 We believe that the fundamental problems with most contemporary views of sexuality are,
 52 first, that the focus is limited to individual pleasure, relational intimacy, and self-fulfillment;
 53 and, second, that biblical marriage is rejected as the exclusive context for sexual intimacy.
 54 While the Scriptures teach that human sexuality is indeed a gift for our enjoyment, its
 55 primary purpose is to glorify God.⁸ Whether young or old, male or female, single or
 56 married, whether attracted to the same, the opposite, or both sexes, all humans are
 57 obligated to glorify our Creator in our sexuality through faithful conformity to God’s design,
 58 revealed in the Scriptures.

59
 60 We desire to adhere fully to biblical sexuality. Out of love we share with others the message
 61 of God’s judgment upon all forms of sexual immorality.⁹ We also believe that there is no
 62 place for any form of cruelty, hate or denigration of those who either disagree with these
 63 positions or hold to other positions. We unequivocally condemn all injustices, sinful
 64 intimidation, and physical violence perpetrated against anyone because of sexual attraction
 65 or practice.

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70 ⁷ Psalm 85:4-7; Matthew 7:4-5; Acts 3:19-20

71 ⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31; Philippians 1:20

72 ⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:17; Revelation 21:8; 22:15

73 **The Single Life**

74 The New Testament commends the single life.¹⁰ As followers of Jesus, we are bound in
 75 spiritual union with Him as Bridegroom, in Whom we are to be complete and content.¹¹ By
 76 expressing our maleness or femaleness, even apart from romantic relationships, we enrich
 77 human community and contribute to the well-being of society. Single men and women are
 78 also given the opportunity to serve the Lord with undivided devotion. They are free, in a
 79 particular way, to dedicate their entire lives to the Lord and find their greatest fulfillment
 80 in pleasing Him. This was true for our Lord Jesus and for the Apostle Paul, who exemplified
 81 and elevated the godly single life. God intends both married and single men and women to
 82 live in vibrant community together, rather than isolation and loneliness. In this sacred
 83 community of deep and committed friendships, we encourage single persons to live out
 84 loving, holy, celibate lives. We, in the EPC, encourage all of our churches to nurture holy
 85 and missional community among and with single members.

86

87 **The Married Life**

88 When God created us male and female, He also instituted the ordinance of marriage in
 89 which one man and one woman are bound together for life in a solemn covenant, which
 90 beautifully illustrates God's covenantal relationship with His chosen people.¹² God directs
 91 His people who marry to wed only fellow believers—those who trust in Jesus Christ alone
 92 for salvation and have joined His Church.¹³ It is within the covenant of marriage alone that
 93 God—for His own glory, the mutual encouragement of the spouses, procreation, the
 94 strengthening of the family, and the welfare of humankind—has instructed husbands and
 95 wives to engage in regular, intimate sexual love.¹⁴ In this uniquely sexual relationship, the
 96 married couple seeks to remember, celebrate, and model Christ's love for His Church and
 97 His Church's devotion to her Lord and to serve one another with godly affection.¹⁵

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99 **A Call to Holiness**

100 We believe God has called us to live holy lives.¹⁶ The Christian believer's body is a temple of

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103 ¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:8, 32-35

104 ¹¹ John 15:5; Ephesians 5:25, 32; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

105 ¹² Genesis 2:23-25; Isaiah 61:10-62:5; Matthew 19:3-12

106 ¹³ Malachi 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14

107 ¹⁴ Proverbs 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

108 ¹⁵ Ephesians 5:25-33

109 ¹⁶ Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians 5:3-5

110 God's Spirit;¹⁷ therefore rather than stealing sexual privileges from one another outside of
 111 marriage, we are called to edify one another in multiple ways that we may all become more
 112 like Christ. Those who are married must avoid every temptation that would diminish the
 113 loving faithfulness they vowed in their marriage covenant. Those who are unmarried,
 114 regardless of sexual attraction, must seek to honor God through diligently avoiding
 115 temptation, restraining ungodly sexual impulses, focusing their energies on serving Christ
 116 and neighbor, and eagerly anticipating the new heavens and the new earth, when all things
 117 will be restored and every godly human longing beautifully fulfilled.¹⁸ Those who find
 118 themselves desiring to be a person of the opposite gender face painful emotions and
 119 weighty consequences. With heartfelt sympathy and a deep desire to love and encourage
 120 them in their circumstances, we believe they must find their contentment in Christ alone,
 121 accepting His wise and gracious providence, and looking to Him for strength to glorify Him
 122 and to serve his or her neighbor through the gender given at conception.¹⁹

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 124 It is encouraging to remember that our Lord Jesus suffered every human temptation
 125 without sinning²⁰ and that God always provides His people a way of escape from every
 126 sin.²¹ Unrepentant sinful behavior is incompatible with the confession of Jesus as Lord
 127 required of all members of the EPC. Additionally, it is required of ordained officers in the
 128 EPC that they believe, practice, and teach the moral standards contained in the Scriptures
 129 and Constitution of the EPC and reflected in this position paper.

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131 **Recovering from Sexual Brokenness**

132 Because of universal human corruption emanating from the fall of Adam and Eve, we are all
 133 broken sexually in one or more ways and to varying degrees.²² We have all sinned. While
 134 we call upon fellow sinners everywhere to repent of their sins,²³ as followers of Christ we
 135 are also committed not to condemn others for their brokenness—their sexual attractions,
 136 sexual dysfunctions or sexual addictions.²⁴ Since we all are disoriented by sin in one
 137 form or another, it is right and good for us to live in continual personal and corporate
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139 ¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

140 ¹⁸ Psalm 16:11; Revelation 19:6-9

141 ¹⁹ We understand that in rare cases, physiological gender ambiguity at birth calls for special care and wisdom.

142 ²⁰ Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16

143 ²¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13

144 ²² Romans 3:22b-23

145 ²³ Acts 17:30

146 ²⁴ Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1

147 repentance, humbly seeking God’s help for ourselves and for our neighbor.²⁵ Through
 148 repentance and faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus, we are forgiven all our sexual
 149 sins, washed from their impurity, and given the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy
 150 of the gospel, setting an example for the watching world and inviting them to join us in
 151 walking with Jesus.²⁶

152
 153 Those in and out of the Church struggling with various forms of sexual disorientation or
 154 gender dysphoria should experience from God’s people a deep desire to identify with them
 155 in their struggles, to walk lovingly with them, and to invite them to join us in following the
 156 Lord. Together as a people, we must all seek healing for our own lives and for each other’s
 157 lives, discovering what it means to be godly men and women in the circumstances decreed
 158 by His providence. Glorifying God in our sexual lives will at times entail suffering or perse-
 159 cution of various sorts, but, by God’s empowering grace, we aspire to obey Him with joy.²⁷

160 161 **The Ministry of the Church**

162 The Church belongs to God.²⁸ He called us out of the dominion of darkness with its sin and
 163 degradation into the glorious light of His love.²⁹ He has called us to reflect His glory by
 164 displaying His character and proclaiming His Word to ourselves and the world. As
 165 repentant and forgiven sinners, we in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church resolve to teach
 166 the biblical truths of godly sexuality to our members and to all who will listen, with
 167 compassion and with courage, regardless of the cost to ourselves. To do otherwise would
 168 be a failure of love. We will strive by God’s grace to discipline our personal lives and our
 169 local churches in accordance with God’s Word. God helping us, we shall continue, within
 170 our churches and in the public arena, to teach against and to refuse to condone or parti-
 171 cipate in any sinful form of sexual practice³⁰—including sexual abuse,³¹ pornography,³²

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176 ²⁵ 2 Corinthians 7:10

177 ²⁶ Romans 8:1ff.; 1 Peter 2:9-12

178 ²⁷ Romans 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; James 1:2-4

179 ²⁸ 1 Peter 1:18-19; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

180 ²⁹ Colossians 1:13; John 12:46, 1 Peter 2:9-10

181 ³⁰ Romans 13:13, 14; Ephesians 5:3

182 ³¹ Deuteronomy 22:25-27; Ephesians 5:28-31

183 ³² Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 8:5-13; Ephesians 2:3

184 sexual lust,³³ extra-marital sex,³⁴ adultery,³⁵ polygamy,³⁶ unbiblical divorce and
 185 remarriage,³⁷ homosexual conduct,³⁸ same-sex union and marriage,³⁹ and gender
 186 reassignment.⁴⁰ At the same time, we resolve to continue to love those who have committed
 187 these sins and/or suffered from them. And we shall wait with eager longing for the day of
 188 our Savior's return, when all shall be made right with us and the world.
 189 In the name of Jesus, our compassionate Savior, we tenderly welcome all—regardless of
 190 their beliefs or lifestyles—to attend our churches. Further, we invite into the membership
 191 of our churches all those who—bruised and broken by the fall—seek now, through sincere
 192 faith and genuine repentance, to live in obedience to the Scriptures and empowered by
 193 the Holy Spirit.

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 195 To God's Name be glory forever.

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 198 *Adopted by the 36th General Assembly*
 199 *June 2016*
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205 ³³ 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5; Colossians 3:5

206 ³⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:6

207 ³⁵ Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22; Proverbs 6:32; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9

208 ³⁶ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4, 5; 1 Timothy 3:2

209 ³⁷ Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

210 For more, see the EPC "Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage."

211 ³⁸ Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10; Jude 7

212 ³⁹ Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 1:32; 13:3-4; 1 Peter 2:14

213 ⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:11-13

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216 *A Position Paper expresses the mind of the General Assembly of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church on a*
 217 *subject of compelling interest. It is a definitive but not an exhaustive statement. This Paper was adopted*
 218 *by the 36th Assembly (June 2016) as a Preliminary Position Paper, subject to revision and discussion, and*
 219 *will be adopted or withdrawn by the 37th General Assembly (June 2017).*

220 *A Position Paper is not to be regarded as binding on the conscience of churches or individuals.*

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