

FINAL DRAFT FOR CHURCH APPROVAL

Harmony Baptist Church Middletown NY.

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We acknowledge and respect the right of any person to determine their lifestyle and morals, whether biblically based or otherwise, and similarly assert the church's right to determine its beliefs in this and other areas. We respect the right of anyone to hold to a different understanding of scripture. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with scripture nor the doctrines of the church.

As a church, our beliefs in all areas of faith and conduct are based on our understanding of God's truth as revealed in the Bible, being the infallible Word of God. For the purposes of deciding Harmony Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy and discipline, the final authority rests with a duly called congregational meeting as set out in the church's constitution. This statement is to form an addition to the church's constitution and by laws.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture*.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, paedophilia, is contrary to biblical teaching and thus also to the church's beliefs. Similarly, any attempt to physically alter one's clear biological gender through surgery and/or hormone treatment is contrary to biblical teaching and the church's beliefs. In all these areas, it is recognized that people may come from a background in which any of these activities or changes may have already occurred. The church will not exclude anyone purely on the basis of lifestyle or gender reassignment.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers in any leadership or teaching role, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

No individual church member or minister of the church who is licensed to perform marriages, will officiate at or co-officiate at any marriage on behalf of or as a representative of the church, outside of the previously stated definition of marriage.

Church facilities will not be used for weddings or receptions where the marriage union is contrary to the church's beliefs in these areas, or for any event organised by any individual or organisation which promotes or celebrates beliefs or practices contrary to those of the church.

The church reserves the right to offer voluntary teaching and counsel to any willing individual(s) which is consistent with the church's beliefs, but rejects any attempt to coerce or put pressure on anyone to adopt beliefs or practices against their own free will. The church respects the right of any individual(s) to terminate any teaching or counseling involvement at any time should they so wish.

We welcome everyone to attend our public church services, whatever their beliefs or practices. We also recognise that there can be diverse personal circumstances in people's lives which must be handled with extreme compassion.

**This statement is based on our understanding of the bible, as understood by the historic confessing church over many centuries, especially passages including Genesis 1 and 2, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, Galatians 5.*