



2021 Presbyterian Church in Canada General Assembly

Out of the 2021 General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) has released the following statement:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada agreed to make changes to its theology and practice regarding marriage, permitting people to choose to define marriage as either a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or a covenant relationship between two adult people. These decisions provide Presbyterian ministers with liberty of conscience and the freedom to choose to officiate or not officiate at the marriages of same-sex couples.

Additionally, the church agreed that LGBTQI people (whether married or single) can be ordained and are welcome to serve as ministers and ruling elders.

This shift in the denominational position will raise questions within our SPL family. In the interest of being transparent, we offer a summary of our response to some of those questions, hoping that it will help us navigate this change with grace.

Is SPL aligned with the PCC's position?

We are firmly aligned with the denomination in our commitment to love everyone. As followers of Jesus Christ, whose greatest commandment is to love, we want to be those who teach and live out sacrificial love.

We also agree with the denomination that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity does not have any bearing on their value. Gay, straight, bi, or trans—we are all beautiful, precious image-bearers of the living God. We are also broken, every one of us.

While we are aligned on so many of the essentials and we respect the leadership of the PCC, we at SPL, along with a significant minority of congregations within the PCC, differ in our understanding of God's design for our sexual expression. We will continue to hold the orthodox view that marriage is a covenant that unites a man and woman for life and that sexual intimacy is intended to be exclusively expressed within that loving relationship.

Does the PCC's position change things for us at SPL?

Not really. Members of the Presbyterian clergy and local church leadership boards (called "Sessions" in Presbyterian circles) are able to continue to teach and lead according to their conscience. Our leadership continues to uphold the orthodox view of marriage.

More importantly, we will continue to call one another to love. We do not believe that we need to agree with each other in order to love each other. Jesus called us to love our neighbours and our enemies—not to convince them to see things our way.

Above all, Jesus is still LORD. We continue to work out what it means to surrender to his Lordship in all matters of life and faith. And, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, we commit to live out that surrender with grace even during difficult times like these.

What if I strongly disagree with the PCC or with SPL on this?

We understand that this is an emotionally charged topic and there are strong differences of opinion. It is really difficult to have good conversations when we hold differing views. As hard as it can be, though, we hope you'll join us in continuing to listen to one another and love each other. We want to flourish as a grace-filled community where we can hold to our convictions with humility and love those who disagree with us.

Church community can be messy and challenging. We hope that, regardless of your convictions around sexuality, you'll join in.

What if I am or those whom I love are LGBTQi+?

We are glad and honored to be part of this community with you. We want to grow in our faith and love of Jesus with you. We commit to walking the road of loving Jesus with you. He is the One who knows what is right and best in all matters. Together with you, we will commit to studying and learning His heart and regard him as LORD and King. Mostly we want to say that we love you and are grateful that you are in our lives.

Why does SPL hold the orthodox view of marriage and sexuality?

We believe that this is what is displayed throughout all of Scripture. In the beginning God created male and female (Genesis 1). The first marriage covenant united the two genders (Genesis 2), and this understanding of marriage is reflected in the Law of Moses. Jesus and the early church also affirmed this view of marriage.

We realize that it is counter-cultural to say that sexual intimacy is reserved only for a marriage between a man and woman. While our society regards most sexual desires as worthy of exploration and expression, we don't believe that this reflects God's good heart for us as his image-bearers. All of us, regardless of our orientation, are tempted in some way sexually. We who follow Jesus are called to surrender our sexuality, along with every other area of our life, to his Lordship.

I have more questions! Are we going to talk about this as a church?

We want to have family conversations about this, where we can look each other in the eyes as we talk. At SPL, the best place for that to happen is within our small groups. We will also open some opportunities for you to dialogue with church leadership on this; watch for details about those.