



into the Melting Pot

the question is more important than the answer

Sunday 08 December 2019

God in Love Unites Us: Marriage and Relationships Report

Notes from the session

Roberta was the Convener of the group who presented this report to the 2019 Methodist Conference. She led this session.

Aims of the group: Information sharing and conversation, and theological development.

Parameters for conversation were based on 1 John 4:7 – Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (NRSV).
Julian of Norwich: “before ever you made us you loved us”.

Spectrum of views exercise

We were asked to physically position ourselves on a line across the room dependent on how strongly we felt about the topic of the question. This served to demonstrate a spectrum of views was evident.

Ground rules for debate for established.

Timeline Summary

- 1979 First Methodist report on human sexuality was progressive in recognising a spectrum
- 1980 Report knocked back into the ‘long grass’ – “Not what the Bible says”
- 1990 Second report
- 1992 Statement released (as if the 1990 report had not been read!) expressing conservative theology
- 1993 Derby resolution expressed support for homosexuals to go into ministry, but still chastity outside (heterosexual) marriage and fidelity within
- 2004 Civil partnerships made legal
- 2006 Living with Contradictory Convictions report
- 2014 Same sex marriage enacted. Methodist person can be in a civil same sex partnership with service of thanksgiving.
- 2019 Marriage and Relationships Report was up front about its development over the years but came as a surprise to many

Video about the team of those who led the report.

This video introduced the members of the team, and demonstrated the wide variety of views and convictions held.

The Bible was important to the discussion.

- 1 Starting point: those in the church are in a diversity of relationship (as in modern society). What is 'being human'? Looking at sex, gender and sexuality, and how our understanding has moved on
- 2 Purpose of relationships – caring for creation includes people. Jesus is an example of relationships. Principles and patterns.
- 3 What is marriage? Changing understanding through the Bible. Also, the development of ideas within Methodism.
- 4 Objections to same sex marriage – the seven Bible passages. These were examined within their context. The conclusion: Methodists should move towards same sex marriage.
- 5 How does the church process this? This will be challenging, especially for the (conservative) African church. Three elements identified
 - Invite Church to talk openly about same sex relationships
 - Value all relationships
 - Recognise that marriage is between two persons.

Questions and Comments

- We are aware that gender and sexuality is no longer a binary choice; was Trans gender issues addressed?
- How can the conservative view be protected?
- Disappointment was expressed by our group in the delay within Methodism over this issue. Any delay was recognised as a negative response, excluding some people on the basis of their gender or sexuality
- What about the seven Bible texts and their context? The overarching trajectory of the Bible as a whole is that 'in love' is more important than those particular seven texts.
- Core theological principles – God's radical love; inclusivity; justice; holiness and righteousness; mercy and forgiveness.
- Polygamy was not covered
- Theology of change – there is none
- Process – report to churches for discussion; Spring synod voting.
- URC – 2/3 majority not obtained on either position.