

Christian Marriage in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A Two-Hour Study

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Office of Theology and Worship
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396
Tel: 502-569-5306
E-mail: taw@pcusa.org



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This study and accompanying resources (including the leader's guide, a six-week version, and translations in Korean and Spanish) are available to download free of charge at www.pcusa.org/marriage.



Preface

The 220th General Assembly (2012) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) received thirteen overtures on the question of same-gender marriage:

- four sought to amend the definition of marriage in the *Book of Order* (W-4.9000) in order to provide for marriage between two people of the same gender;
- six called for authoritative interpretations of the church's constitution to allow for pastoral discretion in presiding at such services; and
- three sought to reaffirm the PC(USA)'s current definition of marriage.

After two days of committee meetings, hours of intense debate in plenary, and elaborate parliamentary procedure, commissioners found themselves without clear consensus. On one matter, however, there seemed to be a general consensus—commissioners shared a desire to help councils of the PC(USA) struggle faithfully with this important question in order to discern the will of God for the church.

In that spirit, the General Assembly instructed the Office of Theology and Worship to prepare a study on Christian marriage in the PC(USA) and to distribute it to all presbyteries and congregations. With this action, the General Assembly called for the PC(USA) to engage in a “season of serious study and discernment” around the meaning of Christian marriage. Presbyteries are asked to report the fruits of this discussion to the Office of the General Assembly at least three months before the 221st General Assembly (2014); the Office of the General Assembly will contact mid-council stated clerks with information on reporting.

The Office of Theology and Worship offers this resource to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with

the admonition to the Hebrews—

“Marriage must be honored in every respect” (Hebrews 13:4);

the hope commended to the Ephesians—

“Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us” (Ephesians 2:14);

and the commandment of Jesus—

“Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:34–35).

By the grace of God, may it be so.

The Office of Theology and Worship
Presbyterian Mission Agency
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



Introduction

This is a study of what the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *has said* on Christian marriage. The issue before the PC(USA) is whether to say something new about marriage, specifically concerning same-gender couples. The aim of this study is to equip the PC(USA) for this discussion by giving it a firm foundation in the church's tradition on marriage.

The intent of this study is threefold:

- to supply primary documents for discussion in an easily accessible format, principally Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, the *Book of Order*, and the *Book of Common Worship's* marriage liturgy (Note: The quotations from the *Book of Confessions* used in this study have not been altered to conform to contemporary language usage.);
- to offer tools for interpreting those documents within the larger context of the church's theological tradition; and
- to provide a healthy process for discussing difficult questions in Christian community.

These three aims give shape to the content of each conversation in the study.

This study is organized around the "Statement on the Gift of Marriage" read in many weddings in Presbyterian churches (*Book of Common Worship*, 842, 858, 884). These familiar words provide a framework to show the breadth of the Reformed Christian understanding of marriage. (See "Appendix 3: Perspectives on Marriage in Historical Context" to read more about how marriage has been understood in Christian history.)

As the commentary on the marriage liturgy explains:

These words, spoken by the minister, serve three purposes. First, they remind the congregation of why they have gathered. Second, they provide a summary of what the church understands about marriage biblically and theologically by announcing the promises and actions of God in regard to marriage. And third, they provide ethical instruction regarding the responsibilities of marriage, not only for the bride and groom but also for the whole congregation.¹

We hope that presbyteries, congregations, and sessions that engage in this study will arrive at:

- a common language for speaking about these matters;
- a clearer view of God's good will for us in marriage;
- a deeper understanding of our tradition and context;
- a better sense of one another's views; and
- a better way forward for the sake of Christ's church.

1. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Christian Marriage: Supplemental Liturgical Resource 3* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 90.

In order to have conversations about marriage that are prayerful, deep, and fruitful, we encourage you to commit to these practices as you talk together:

Heed these words from Scripture: “by speaking the truth with love, let’s grow in every way into Christ . . .” (Ephesians 4:15).

Be present: bring your ideas, beliefs, and convictions with you, and be ready and willing to contribute them to the shared conversation.

Listen well: be attentive, respectful, and patient; ask for clarification when you don’t understand.

Speak well: speak with confidence, yet with awareness that others may see things differently; make space for their voices too.

Build the conversation: make connections with previous sessions and with what others have said, so that the conversation grows and deepens as you go.

Practice friendliness: show warmth and kindness to others, and be ready to receive their friendship.

Don’t force it: don’t try to push an agenda or reach a predetermined outcome, such as “consensus” or “having good feelings.”

Sometimes good conversations clarify the nature and extent of our disagreements. Good conversation is always a struggle with our own issues and the issues of others. This is not likely your last conversation on Christian marriage. Live in confidence that God will use these words—even when they are difficult—for the building up of the body of Christ.



Facilitating the Dialogue

Gathering in plenary (15 minutes)

Begin with prayer:

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Loving God, as Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana, change our sorrow into joy, our weakness into strength, and our fear into hope. Help us to purify our thoughts, measure out our words, and drink deeply of your wisdom. Above all, surprise us with the abundance of your grace, the joy of your Spirit, and the fullness of life that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn:

“Though I May Speak”

Presbyterian Hymnal, 335

Now, O Lord, send forth your Holy Spirit to open our ears, our hearts, our minds, and our lives that we might hear your Word through all our words and bring glory to Christ Jesus, we pray.

Amen.

Announce the purpose of this gathering: to have a conversation that fosters mutual understanding of the different perspectives on Christian marriage, engaging the resources of our theological tradition in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Review introduction (pp. v–vi) and the good conversation practices (p. vi). Invite questions and comments for clarification.

Go over logistics. Since the session lasts two hours, there will be no breaks. Participants are free to partake of the refreshments whenever it will not be disruptive to others. Inform people of restroom locations.

Ask the table groups to select a facilitator for the conversations. Remind them that you will be keeping time and directing the table groups when to move to the next conversation after 30 minutes. Invite the participants to begin Table Conversation 1 using the materials on the following pages.



Table Conversation 1

(30 minutes)

Statement 1: Marriage is a good gift from God and is a part of the created order.

Individually read the background texts. Quickly note your questions and anything that you think is significant to contribute to the conversation, including what surprised you as you studied these texts.

Background Texts

Scripture:

Genesis 1:24–31 In this first story of creation in Genesis, the origin of male and female is described. This passage has been used by the church to understand marriage as part of the created order and a gift to human beings.

²⁴God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. ²⁵God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. ²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

²⁷God created humanity in God’s own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.” ²⁹Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. ³⁰To all wildlife, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened. ³¹God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

Genesis 2:18–25 God’s provision for human companionship and community as part of creation is central to this second story of creation:

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It’s not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. ²⁰The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found. ²¹So the LORD God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. ²²With the rib taken from the human, the LORD God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being.

²³The human said,

“This one finally is bone from my bones
and flesh from my flesh.

She will be called a woman

because from a man she was taken.”

²⁴This is the reason that a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they weren’t embarrassed.

Mark 10:1–9 Jesus teaches on marriage by referring back to the story of creation in Genesis 2.

⁷Because of this, a man should leave his father and mother and be joined together with his wife, ⁸and the two will be one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh.

Statement on the Gift of Marriage:

We gather in the presence of God to give thanks for the gift of marriage, to witness the joining together of [name] and [name], to surround them with our prayers, and to ask God’s blessing upon them, so that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in their love for God.

God created us male and female, and gave us marriage so that husband and wife may help and comfort each other, living faithfully together in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, throughout all their days.

Book of Common Worship, 842

Commentary on the Liturgy for Christian Marriage:

“*We gather . . .*” The opening paragraph reminds the congregation that they are not passive spectators at the wedding. Theirs is to be an active role. They are to worship God, giving thanks for the gift of marriage. They are to pray for the couple and to express the support of the community of faith by witnessing the couple’s vows.

Companion to the Book of Common Worship, 572

“*God created us male and female . . .*” Biblically, marriage has its origins in God’s creation of human beings as male and female, to provide for them steadfast companionship and mutual support (Gen. 2:18–25; Mark 10:7–8).

Supplemental Liturgical Resource 3: Christian Marriage, 90

Confessions:

Westminster Confession of Faith:

Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man and one woman enter, cherishing a mutual esteem and love, bearing with each other's infirmities and weaknesses, comforting each other in trouble, providing in honesty and industry for each other and for their household, praying for each other, and living together the length of their days as heirs of the grace of life.

Book of Confessions, 6.131

Confession of 1967:

God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights.

Book of Confessions, 9.44

Directory for Worship:

(Note: Words or phrases in **bold** pertain to main ideas in this session.)

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, **publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.**

Book of Order, W-4.9001

Conversation

1. After sharing insights and questions from these background texts and your own reading done before this meeting, briefly name ways in which marriage is a gift to you and to the human community.
2. Biblical descriptions of marriage include normative teaching and narrative descriptions of many patterns of relationship. How does marriage belong to and serve God's created order?
3. Our Directory for Worship says that marriage is both a civil contract and a sacred covenant. What is the difference between a civil contract and a sacred covenant? How can marriage be both a civil contract and a sacred covenant?
4. How does the sexual identity of those who marry inform the understanding of marriage as covenant relationship, witnessed by the community of faith, and part of the created order?



Table Conversation 2

(30 minutes)

Statement 2: Marriage provides for the full expression of love and contributes to the well-being of society.

Individually read the background texts. Quickly note your questions and anything that you think is significant to contribute to the conversation, including what surprised you as you studied these texts.

Background Texts

Scripture:

Song of Songs 8:6–7 A biblical celebration of physical intimacy. The church has had difficulty knowing quite what to do with the Song of Songs, with its celebration of physical intimacy. Often it has been treated allegorically. Although the imagery of this passage can be foreign to the modern reader, the sense of passion still comes through.

⁶Set me as a seal over your heart,
as a seal upon your arm,
for love is as strong as death,
passionate love unrelenting as the grave.
Its darts are darts of fire—
divine flame!

⁷Rushing waters can't quench love;
rivers can't wash it away.
If someone gave
all his estate in exchange for love,
he would be laughed to utter shame.

1 Corinthians 7:3–7 This passage speaks quite openly about sexual intimacy in marriage within the context of a discussion of singleness and marriage.

³The husband should meet his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should do the same for her husband. ⁴The wife doesn't have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband doesn't have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Don't refuse to meet each other's needs unless you both agree for a short period of time to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come back together again so that Satan might not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I'm saying this to give you permission; it's not a command. ⁷I wish all people were like me, but each has a particular gift from God: one has this gift, and another has that one.

Genesis 1:28 This passage connects human flourishing with care over all creation.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.”

Deuteronomy 6:1–9 In Deuteronomy we find the Great Commandment, that we should love God with all that we are; this covenant is extended throughout generations.

Now these are the commandments, the regulations, and the case laws that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you to follow in the land you are entering to possess, ²so that you will fear the LORD your God by keeping all his regulations and his commandments that I am commanding you—both you and your sons and daughters—all the days of your life and so that you will lengthen your life. ³Listen to them, Israel! Follow them carefully so that things will go well for you and so that you will continue to multiply exactly as the LORD, your ancestors’ God, promised you, in a land full of milk and honey.

⁴Israel, listen! Our God is the LORD! Only the LORD!

⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength.

⁶These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. ⁷Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up.

⁸Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol. ⁹Write them on your house’s doorframes and on your city’s gates.

1 Timothy 5:1–8 This passage speaks of the Christian’s duty to respect, honor, and provide for family.

Don’t correct an older man, but encourage him like he’s your father; treat younger men like your brothers, ²treat older women like your mother, and treat younger women like your sisters with appropriate respect.

³Take care of widows who are truly needy. ⁴But if a particular widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn to respect their own family and repay their parents, because this pleases God. ⁵A widow who is truly needy and all alone puts her hope in God and keeps on going with requests and prayers, night and day. ⁶But a widow who tries to live a life of luxury is dead even while she is alive. ⁷Teach these things so that the families will be without fault. ⁸But if someone doesn’t provide for their own family, and especially for a member of their household, they have denied the faith. They are worse than those who have no faith.

Statement on the Gift of Marriage:

God gave us marriage for the full expression of the love between a man and a woman. In marriage a woman and a man belong to each other, and with affection and tenderness freely give themselves to each other.

God gave us marriage for the well-being of human society, for the ordering of family life, and for the birth and nurture of children.

Book of Common Worship, 842

Commentary on the Liturgy for Christian Marriage

“God gave us marriage for the full expression of the love between a man and a woman . . .” This is the first of three statements that begin with the refrain, “God gave us . . .” Marriage, which from a sociological perspective is a product of human society, is also understood theologically to be a good and gracious gift of God. A wedding is the only service of worship in the life of the church where sexuality and sexual union are major themes, and the phrase “the full expression of the love between a man and a woman” acknowledges that fact. In the lifelong covenant of marriage, the sexual relationship between a man and a woman finds its richest physical, emotional, and spiritual expression. “They are no longer two but one flesh” (Mark 10:8). The statement “In marriage a woman and a man belong to each other” further points to the depth of the marriage covenant and echoes the word of Paul in 1 Cor. 7:3–7 regarding the sexual mutuality of marriage.

“God gave us marriage . . . for the birth and nurture of children . . .” This statement affirms the role of marriage in sustaining humankind and the place of marriage as a basic unit of ordered human society. The birth and nurture of children are essential for the continuation of the human race and are an expression of hope and confidence in God’s providential care. Since this statement is part of a general declaration about the church’s understanding of marriage, it is ordinarily appropriate to say these words even if the particular couple being married, for reasons of health, age, or personal choice, are unlikely to have children themselves. At this point in the service, the theological affirmations are about marriage in general. Later in the rite the language will become more focused upon the specific marriage being celebrated this day.

Supplemental Liturgical Resource 3: Christian Marriage, 90–91

Confessions:

Second Helvetic Confession:

For marriage (which is the medicine of incontinency, and continency itself) was instituted by the Lord God himself, who blessed it most bountifully, and willed man and woman to cleave one to the other inseparably, and to live together in complete love and concord (Matt. 19:4 ff). Whereupon we know that the apostle said: “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). And again: “If a girl marries, she does not sin” (1 Cor. 7:28). . . . We therefore condemn polygamy, and those who condemn second marriages.

Book of Confessions, 5.246

Westminster Confession of Faith:

Marriage for the Christian has religious as well as civil significance. The distinctive contribution of the church in performing the marriage ceremony is to affirm the divine institution of marriage; to invoke God’s blessing upon those who enter into the marital relationship in accordance with his word; to hear the vows of those who desire to be married; and to assure the married partners of God’s grace within their new relationship.

Book of Confessions, 6.136

Directory for Worship:

(Note: Words or phrases in **bold** pertain to main ideas in this session.)

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind **for the well-being of the entire human family**. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a **lifelong commitment** is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

A service of worship **recognizing a civil marriage** and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple.

Book of Order, W-4.9001, W-4.9006

Conversation

1. Share observations, reflections, questions, and insights about these statements.
2. This section of the study focuses on the church's conviction that marriage should be an expression of love reflecting God's love for the church. How does this challenge popular notions of love?
3. What does Paul's admonition for spouses to meet one another's sexual needs teach us about marriage? Why is physical intimacy so important to the marital relationship?
4. Review Genesis 1:28, Deuteronomy 6:1–9, and 1 Timothy 5:1–8.
5. The marriage standards of the PC(USA) assume a consistency between the definition of marriage by the state and by the church. The United States now has a patchwork of marriage laws. How do we as a church deal with these new differences between marriage as understood by the church, and marriage as understood by the state? Is it important that ministers be agents of the state when they officiate at wedding ceremonies? Why or why not? What would it look like for the church to differ from the state in its understanding of marriage?
6. This session has focused on marriage as an expression of love and as a reflection of the holy mystery of Christ's love for the church. How does the sexual identity of those who marry inform our understanding of marriage as an expression of love as well as an institution that contributes to the well-being of society?



Table Conversation 3

(30 minutes)

Statement 3: Marriage reflects Christ's relationship with the church and aids Christian discipleship.

Individually read the background texts. Quickly note your questions and anything that you think is significant to contribute to the conversation, including what surprised you as you studied these texts.

Background Texts

Scripture:

Hosea 2:14–16, 19–23 The image of marriage is a way of understanding the relationship between God and the people of God:

¹⁴Therefore, I will charm her,
and bring her into the desert,
and speak tenderly to her heart.

¹⁵From there I will give her vineyards,
and make the Achor Valley a door of hope.
There she will respond to me as in the days of her youth,
like the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.

¹⁶On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, “My husband,” and no longer will you call me, “My Lord.”

¹⁹I will take you for my wife forever;
I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice,
in devoted love, and in mercy.

²⁰I will take you for my wife in faithfulness;
and you will know the LORD.

²¹On that day I will answer, says the LORD.
I will answer the heavens
and they will answer the earth.

²²The earth will answer the corn, the new wine, and the fresh oil,
and they will answer Jezreel;

²³I will sow him for myself in the land;
and I will have compassion on No Compassion,
and I will say to Not My People, “You are my people”;
and he will say, “You are my God.”

Hebrews 13:4 The author of Hebrews writes that marriage should be honored in the Christian community.

⁴Marriage must be honored in every respect, with no cheating on the relationship, because God will judge the sexually immoral person and the person who commits adultery.

Galatians 5:16–25 Paul outlines for the Galatians the differences between a life of Christian discipleship and a life of self-indulgence. The fruit of the Spirit represents a new way of living that puts the well-being of others before personal or individual desires. The fruit of the flesh is marked by self-interest and selfishness.

¹⁶I say be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires. ¹⁷A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn't do whatever you want to do. ¹⁸But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren't under the Law. ¹⁹The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, ²⁰idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, ²¹jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with its passions and its desires.

²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit.

Statement on the Gift of Marriage:

God gave us marriage as a holy mystery in which a man and a woman are joined together, and become one, just as Christ is one with the church. In marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life, created, ordered, and blessed by God. This way of life must not be entered into carelessly, or from selfish motives, but responsibly, and prayerfully.

Book of Common Worship, 842

Commentary on the Liturgy for Christian Marriage:

“God gave us marriage as a holy mystery . . .” This statement is based upon Ephesians 5:31–33, in which the relationship between a husband and wife is presented as a profound mystery, analogous to the relationship between Christ and the church. Marriage, therefore, points beyond itself to the redemptive activity of God in Christ.

“In marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life . . .” Here the church affirms that the choice to marry is, in a sense, a vocational choice. In baptism all Christians are called to a new way of life, and Christians who are married are to express that baptismal call in and through their marriages. Marriage is not a place where two self-serving people meet to satisfy their desires; it is a journey of faith where two are joined as one in Christ for discipleship and mission.

Confessions:

Confession of 1967:

Biblical visions and images of the rule of Christ, such as a heavenly city, a father's house, a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents the triumph of God over all that resists his will and disrupts his creation. Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in men and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption.

Book of Confessions, 9.54

Westminster Confession of Faith:

Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character.

Book of Confessions, 6.134

Directory for Worship:

(Note: Words or phrases in **bold** pertain to main ideas in this session.)

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. **For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship.** In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

Book of Order, W-4.9001

Conversation

1. The analogy between marriage and Christ's relationship with the church intensifies our understanding of the covenant between spouses. How might an understanding of marriage as a covenant, reflecting God's covenant with us in Christ, affect the way spouses treat one another?
2. In baptism God claims us and we respond in gratitude by dedicating our lives to God's service. In what ways might a person live out the claims of baptism through marriage? In what ways does marriage promote discipleship in the Christian life? Is it ever a hindrance to living the Christian life?
3. What does it mean for the church to honor marriage today?
4. This section of the study has focused on marriage as intended for the well-being of society as well as a means by which Christian spouses live out their lives of discipleship together. How does the sexual identity of those who marry inform the understanding of marriage as intended for the well-being of society and a means of discipleship?



Closing (15 minutes)

Ask participants, in plenary or in table groups, to reflect on the following questions. Your mid-council stated clerk will have a process for reporting to the Office of the General Assembly.

1. What did you learn or come to a better appreciation of concerning marriage?
2. How were your thoughts strengthened or challenged?
3. Responses to this study will be communicated to the 221st General Assembly (2014). What would you like to say to the commissioners who will gather for that General Assembly?

Close with prayer:

Holy God,
as you have raised us from death
by the gift of your grace,
help us to follow Christ each day,
walking in newness of life,
so that we may be a new creation
in the glory of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn:

“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

Presbyterian Hymnal, 387

Blessing:

May the Lord bless us with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.



Bibliography/For Further Reading

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