

Eugene Friends Church statement on human sexuality

History and context: The statement that follows describes a consensus that EFC has discerned regarding our understanding of committed relationships between persons of the same sex. We have arrived at this point in our journey after a more than year-long process of listening to each other, the Bible, various Christian writers, our own experience and that of others, and to the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge with humility that individual Christians have come to different personal understandings of the leading of the Holy Spirit in the matter of same-sex sexual relations. Some believe that sexual abstinence is the only appropriate response, while others believe that God blesses committed monogamous relationships between two persons of the same sex. We value each individual's contribution to our discernment, and trust that all have sought the Spirit's leading with faithfulness and humility. While our discussions were well attended and vigorously engaging, we also recognize that some in our community did not choose to participate in the process, and we respect their decision. While the statement expresses the sense of our leading as a community, we acknowledge and respect that the views of some individuals may not be in complete unity with its conclusions. We also agree to remain attentive to the Holy Spirit who continues to speak to us. The statement follows:

Statement: Eugene Friends Church affirms that God created humans with a desire for connected community, for friendship, for family, and for loving sexual intimacy, all of which are part of God's love and God's good creation; and we commit to teach and encourage those values that strengthen and support committed sexual relationships: love, commitment, respect, equality and fidelity. We will not exclude any person from full participation in the life and ministry of Eugene Friends Church solely on the basis of their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or commitment to a lifelong monogamous same-sex relationship.

What we learned about ourselves and God's call through our discernment process: In the process of listening and laboring together, we have discerned the following:

- We affirm that the Kingdom of God is all-embracing, and the call of Christ is for every person to follow.
- We maintain our unity through our common commitment to Christ and to this particular Christian community.
- We respect that all those participating in these discussions affirm a belief in the authority of the Bible, but that on some matters our conclusions differ. As a community we conclude that biblical texts are not condemning of monogamous, committed same-sex relationships, while accepting in love and humility that some individual members do not concur.
- We recognize that many persons have suffered great harm and shame as a result of having been excluded from full participation in the Christian community on the basis of their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or commitment to a lifelong monogamous same-sex relationship; and we desire to avoid such harm in the future, and to help heal injury from past rejections.

- We commit ourselves to treat one another with love, respect, openness and humility, despite differences of understanding.
- We have become stronger as a community and more committed to each other as a result of this group discernment experience.
- We affirm each person's privilege and responsibility to seek God, honor the leading of the Holy Spirit, search the scriptures, pray, consult with other Christians in community, and make decisions according to individual conscience.
- We realize that God may still have much to teach us in this area, and so we commit to continue to listen for the voice of God as we make this journey.