

Summary Document: Reflections on Same-Sex Marriage within the Church

Purpose

This document brings together three differing perspectives to help members prayerfully and thoughtfully consider whether ministers should be permitted to marry same-sex couples within the Church. Each perspective reflects a sincere effort to understand the Lord's will regarding marriage, human relationships, and the life of the Church.

1. The Nature and Meaning of Marriage

Across all viewpoints, there is shared agreement that marriage is deeply spiritual and rooted in Divine principles.

- Marriage is seen as reflecting a **fundamental union within the Divine**—often described as the union of **love and wisdom**, or **good and truth**. This union is mirrored: Within each individual (heart and mind),
- Between the Lord and the Church,
- And in human relationships.

However, the perspectives differ in how this spiritual reality relates to **external, earthly marriage**:

- **Brian's View** emphasises that the deepest form of marriage is spiritual—within the individual and between the person and the Lord—and suggests that external relationships may reflect this inner union in diverse ways.
- **Bruce's View** holds that this Divine pattern is specifically and necessarily expressed in the **complementary union of a man and a woman**, which uniquely embodies creation and fruitfulness.
- **Jack's View** highlights that while teachings on spiritual marriage are clear, their application to modern questions—such as same-sex marriage—is less explicit, leading to differing interpretations.

2. Same-Sex Relationships: Differing Interpretations

(Brian)

- Argues that qualities traditionally associated with true marriage—such as:
 - Faithfulness,
 - Spiritual connection,
 - Mutual love,
 - Desire for lifelong union,can also be present in **same-sex relationships**.
- Suggests that “conjugal love” (or the deeper “love that unites”) may not be limited to heterosexual couples, but could include “**countless varieties**” of loving, committed relationships.
- Raises the possibility that scriptural and doctrinal teachings:
 - May be **symbolic or spiritually interpreted**, rather than strictly literal,
 - And that some biblical prohibitions may relate to **abuse, exploitation, or cultural practices**, rather than loving, consensual relationships.

(Bruce)

- Maintains that marriage, in its true and complete form, is **intrinsically between a man and a woman**, reflecting:
 - The basic principle of correspondence that is an integral feature of the whole of life in every respect.
 - Complementary differences,
 - The potential for new life,
 - And the Divine pattern of creation.
- Expresses concern that redefining marriage risks:
 - Departing from clear Divine teaching,
 - Undermining a foundational spiritual principle,
 - And contributing to broader societal and relational instability.
- While affirming that all individuals should be **welcomed with love and compassion**, this view distinguishes between:
 - **Accepting individuals**, and
 - **Recognizing same-sex unions as marriage**.
- Suggests that **blessing friendships or committed partnerships** may be appropriate but not equating them with marriage.

(Jack)

- Acknowledges that the Church has **not reached consensus**, even after extended discussion.
- Recognizes that:
 - Members and ministers hold **genuinely differing views**,
 - And such diversity may reflect the Church as a whole body.
- Places the issue within a **historical context**, noting that:
 - The Church has often resisted change before later accepting it (e.g., on issues like slavery or persecution),
 - And current decisions may likewise be judged by future generations.
- Encourages reflection on:
 - “What would Jesus do?”
 - Whether the Church is being called to **act from love first**, even when certainty is lacking.
- Suggests a **practical way forward**:
 - Allowing ministers, according to conscience, to decide whether to perform same-sex marriages,
 - With the broader decision determined through a **democratic process** among members.

3. The Role of Scripture and Doctrine

All perspectives value Scripture and theological teachings, but differ in interpretation:

- **Brian’s View** emphasizes:
 - The importance of **context, translation, and historical setting**,
 - And the possibility of **non-literal or evolving understandings**.
- **Bruce’s View** stresses:
 - The **clarity and consistency** of Divine teaching,
 - And the need to **uphold it faithfully**, rather than adapt it to cultural trends.
- **Jack’s View** recognizes:
 - That interpretation has **varied across time**,
 - And that discernment may involve both **tradition and present insight**.

4. Pastoral and Spiritual Considerations

Despite disagreement, there is strong common ground:

- The Church must:
 - **Welcome all people,**
 - **Show love, compassion, and understanding,**
 - Avoid judgment of individuals' inner spiritual states.
- There is shared concern for:
 - Authentic relationships marked by **faithfulness, integrity, and care,**
 - The spiritual well-being of individuals,
 - And the unity and mission of the Church.

5. Key Questions for Reflection

Members may wish to consider:

- What is the **essential nature of marriage**—primarily spiritual, physical, or both?
- How should we understand the relationship between **internal (spiritual) realities and external (earthly) forms**?
- To what extent should the Church:
 - **Adhere to traditional teachings,** perceived by some to teach faithfully what the Lord has spoken in the Word, or
 - **Adapt in response to new understanding?**
- How can the Church remain:
 - Faithful to the Lord's will,
 - While also embodying **love, inclusion, and compassion?**
- What does it mean, in this context, to **"speak the truth in love"**?

Conclusion

These perspectives reflect a shared desire to follow the Lord faithfully, yet they differ in how His will is understood in this matter. The question before the Church is not only about policy, but about how best to hold together:

- **Truth and love**
- **Tradition and discernment**
- **Unity and diversity**

Members are invited to reflect prayerfully, thoughtfully, and charitably as they consider how to move forward together.

Revd's Bruce Jarvis, Brian Talbot & Jack Dunion March 2026

If you'd like to talk anything through, you're warmly invited to Meet the Minister for a confidential and supportive conversation. You can find further information here <https://www.generalconference.org.uk/contact/meet-the-minister/>, or email ministers.secretary@generalconference.org.uk

You can also visit our website <https://www.generalconference.org.uk/same-sex-marriage-consultation/>, which we will regularly update with helpful resources from ministers i.e., films, written materials and details of workshops.

Whatever your questions or reflections, you don't have to navigate them alone.

