

Lex orandi, lex credendi – As we pray, so we believe

Let us Pray

Gracious God, we know that your love is infinite and that you care about all areas of our life. In this time of economic insecurity, help us to trust that all of our security is in you. Keep us mindful that you always have and always will provide for our needs. Apart from you we can do nothing.

Merciful God, We ask that you give our leaders the wisdom to guide our nation and the world out of the current economic crisis. Help us to protect the poor and all those who are struggling during to share essential resources with those who lack the necessities of life, and to do so with humble, grateful and loving hearts. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Our Baptismal Covenant

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will, with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will, with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will, with God's help.

General Principles of Episcopal Social Teaching on the Family and Sexuality*

- The family is the most basic unit for preserving and furthering civil society, although since the 1980s, a consensus no longer exists about how inclusive or exclusive the institution "family" is to be understood with the possibility of single-parents, extramarital partnership arrangements, and elderly widows and widowers living alone.
- Abortion as a means of birth control and family planning is to be condemned. Abortion and the termination of pregnancy are moral options for Christians only under certain conditions: (1) the mother's physical health is endangered; (2) strong conclusive evidence that the offspring will likely be badly deformed in body or mind; (3) pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. Other reasons for terminating pregnancy may be considered, but Episcopalians should seek the counsel of a priest before a final decision. The Church rejects the argument that abortion is an abso-

lute civil right of the woman carrying the child and hers alone. For Christians, abortion is not an unconditional autonomous right without moral consequences.

- Scientific and medical technologies (e.g. genetic engineering, "test tube babies," and *in vitro* fertilization) can be undertaken by Christians with good conscience. But applying prenatal sex selection technologies as a basis for abortion is roundly condemned.
- The biblical doctrine of creation is the theological basis for a Christian concept of human sexuality, in which the church's views are grounded. Sexuality is a gift from God and is a fundamental aspect of human personality. As such human sexuality is "other" oriented thereby manifesting its role in creating genuine community within human relationships. Autonomy and private beliefs about sexuality (i.e., that it is a private affair) can easily become justification for increasing forms of inhumanity toward others. In this and other areas of human concern.
- The fulfillment of that aspect is to be found in institutions that arise from covenantal love between two persons (the sacramental basis of matrimony). Any circumstances or unions that equate sexuality with temporary pleasure, promiscuity, prostitution, and deviant sexual activity (e.g., pedophilia, bestiality, rape, incest) violate the Christian concept of sexuality.
- Those who experience homosexual orientation are to be considered children of God, endowed with the image of God as are all people, and share in the benefits of the church's attention, pastoral care, and love as well as equal protection under civil laws as citizens. Insights into the nature of homosexuality have caused the church to re-evaluate its view of marriage as restricted to a man and a woman and the admission of homosexual persons in ministry.
- Marital fidelity and sexual chastity are the standards for Christian morality and the sex act.
- Sex is to express mutual love between partners, to afford them pleasure within the marital bond, and when possible, to procreate and further family life within the church and the civil community. Adultery and promiscuity fall outside these norms and are unacceptable as a proper Christian understanding of the purpose and use of sex.

** These principles are gleaned from over a century of statements by General Convention and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops of The Episcopal Church.*

How does our understanding of creation influence our understanding of human sexuality?

How does my understanding of human sexuality have an impact on factors that influence marriage and family life?

How do I see sex as an expression of love apart from producing children?

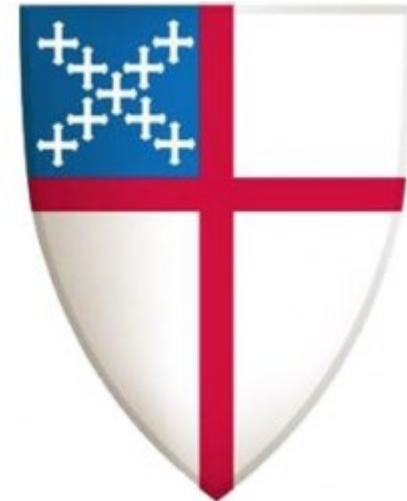
Notes:



St. Luke's Episcopal Church Adult Forum:

Political Responsibility

Faithful Citizenship



**Session 3: What Principles Does the Church Hold Concerning
Issues Affecting Marriage and Family Life?**

Discussion Guide