



St. Paul's Church

5750 King Road, Nobleton, ON L0G 1N0
905-859-0843 www.stpaulsnobleton.ca

To the members and friends of St. Paul's Church, Nobleton

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ:

When the General Assembly, the highest governing body in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, met online in June, it approved two motions that denote a major shift in the theology and practice of both marriage and ordination for the denomination. Those two motions read as follows:

1. The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centred, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult persons.
That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage.
2. That congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders.

These two resolutions were adopted by a margin of 136-76 and 130-83 respectively, so the division within the denomination was plainly evident. The division is not exclusively over the issue of human sexuality; it is a symptom of a deeper division over how we read and interpret the Bible.

The Session, our local church's governing body, wants you to know that for us, at St. Paul's, there will be **no change** to our theology and practice of marriage and ordination. Our congregation and its leadership have long upheld the Bible as the Word of God, and that it is well understood through the historic, apostolic teaching of the church, and through the creeds and confessions of the Reformation, not least the Westminster Confession of Faith, and more recently, Living Faith. At its meeting on July 6, 2021, the Session adopted a resolution to disagree with the motions adopted by the General Assembly, thereby exercising liberty of conscience and action on these matters. St. Paul's will maintain its traditional standards for marriage and leadership in the church, because we believe that they are consistent with the teaching of the Bible.

The Session reaffirms the biblical definition of marriage as between one genetically-born man and one genetically-born woman, as well as the standards set historically and biblically for the ordination of teaching elders (pastors) and ruling elders in the Reformed tradition.

That said, we also reaffirm that love is the ultimate mark of all who follow Jesus, and that we are called to love all people. Anyone is welcome to worship with us, regardless of sexuality. All of us are in need of God's saving grace and help. We underscore that it is possible to love another person and, at the same time, disagree with any view that person holds, including sexual identity.

We believe that followers of Jesus find their identity not in their sexuality, but in their place as beloved children of God. And that is how we seek to love others. We do not always need to agree in order to love well.

...continued...

Connect with God :: Grow in Christ :: Serve in Community

Because this is an emotionally charged subject, you may have strong feelings one way or the other, and that's understandable. You or someone you love may have a leaning toward an alternative sexuality. The Session's hope is that we will be able to love one another and encourage each other despite the differences of opinion that may be held.

Some may be wondering if this is grounds for us to leave The Presbyterian Church in Canada. At this time, the Session chooses to hold off on such a decision, because the General Assembly has directed its Assembly Council, which meets between annual meetings of the Assembly, to bring a report to the next General Assembly regarding the possibility of two theologically-aligned streams of the church, whereby we would be able to align ourselves for oversight with churches and leaders who hold traditional, biblical views. By this time next year, we should know whether this will be able to happen.

A majority in the Presbytery of Oak Ridges, our overseeing body, hold the same position we do. When the debate over these motions came before our Presbytery, it voted against them by about a two-thirds margin. So, at the moment, our Presbytery is in large part sympathetic to our position.

We reiterate that for St. Paul's, nothing is changing. We will continue to teach and practice what the Bible says, in season and out of season. But the denomination's decision may have raised questions for you, and you are invited to submit them to our Pastor by email (jeff@stpaulsnobleton.ca).

The Session will be considering further steps in the coming months with regard to distancing ourselves from the denomination's change in course, and we will update you as time goes on.

These are challenging days to be the church of Jesus, but he remains Lord and remains the only King and Head of the Church. We will continue to push ahead with his mission as we encourage people to connect with God, grow in Christ, and serve in community.

Yours in Christ,
The Session of St. Paul's
John E. Mullings, Clerk of Session
Dr. Jeff Loach, Pastor