

Resources for church leaders - Biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality

The following affirmations summarise the position of the Evangelical Alliance in its 2012 Report Biblical and pastoral responses to homosexuality.

AFFIRMATIONS

We are conscious that different evangelicals might apply certain of these points in different ways, but we believe that, taken together, they reflect an authentic, mainstream evangelical response to homosexuality in general and sexually active same-sex partnerships in particular:

1. We recognise that all of us are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people – whatever our sexuality – is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterise evangelical responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in future.
2. We affirm God's love and concern for all human beings, whatever their sexuality, and so repudiate all attitudes and actions which victimise or diminish people whose affections are directed towards people of the same sex. We are encouraged many Christians now recognise and deeply regret the hurt caused by past and present failures in their responses to those who experience same-sex attraction.
3. We affirm that marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship for life. Marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations and homoerotic sexual practice is incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture. We do not accept that holding these theological and ethical views on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.
4. We encourage evangelical congregations to be communities of grace in which those who experience same-sex attraction and seek to live faithfully in accordance with biblical teaching are welcomed and affirmed. Such Christians need churches which are safe spaces where they are able to share and explore their stories with fellow believers for mutual encouragement and support as we help each other grow together into maturity in Christ.
5. We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active same-sex partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship and to permit the ordination to ministry of those in such sexual relationships. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.
6. We oppose church services of blessing for civil partnerships and other forms of gay and lesbian relationships as unbiblical and reject any redefinition of marriage to encompass same-sex relationships.
7. We commend and encourage all those who experience same-sex attraction and have committed themselves to chastity by refraining from homoerotic sexual practice. We believe they should be

eligible for ordination and leadership within the church, recognising that they can bring invaluable insights and experience to the sphere of Christian pastoral ministry.

8. We welcome and support the work of those individuals and organisations who responsibly seek to help Christians who experience same-sex attraction as in conflict with their commitment to live in accordance with biblical teaching. This help will involve counsel and pastoral support to live a chaste life and, as part of this process, some may seek and experience changes in the strength or direction of their same-sex attractions.

9. We believe both habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance and public promotion of such activity are inconsistent with faithful church membership. While processes of membership and discipline differ from one church context to another, we believe that either of these behaviours warrants consideration for church discipline.

10. We encourage evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active lesbians and gay men. However, they should do so in the expectation that they, like all of us who are living outside God's purposes, will come in due course to see the need to be transformed and live in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness, patience and ongoing pastoral care during this process and after a person renounces same-sex sexual relations.