

Island ECC Positional Paper

Homosexuality

A substantial issue facing modern culture is confusion and conflicting views of sexual identity and behavior. We at Island Evangelical Community Church believe there is a need to state clearly our understanding of the biblical teaching on one matter of sexuality, homosexual practice. It is also our desire to set forth our position regarding the appropriate response of Christians and the church to this issue.

Our church has seven biblically-based Core Values that guide our overall ministry and practice. Some of these values can be applied to address the issue of homosexuality and the church.

We practice **Responsive Grace**.

We value people because we are accepted by God as created in the image of God. We believe that the Bible teaches how to live the best possible life, and we want everyone to hear the good news about Jesus Christ. We share these truths with everyone, regardless of their background, social status, orientation or current struggles. Responsive grace recognizes that we are all sinners who are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8), and that we love others because God first loved us. The apostle Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." (1 Timothy 1:15) If we truly adopt this attitude, we will be more likely to show grace to others and not judge them.

We practice **Authentic Community**.

We connect and live life in meaningful relationships. In all conversations we are committed to a tone that builds up one another. We strive to share our convictions with precision, humility, empathy, respect and above all, love. We also believe that the gospel is most impactful when it is shared through close relationships (1 Thessalonians 2:8). We are committed to creating an environment of trust where people feel safe to share their story and the struggles and challenges that they're facing.

We practice **Radical Transformation**.


We guide people to experience God and, therefore, to dramatic life change. We believe the gospel has the power to transform our lives completely (Romans 12:2) and so free us from anything that holds us back from receiving and experiencing God's best for us. We are committed to support anyone in his or her personal journey to become more like Christ. This calls for understanding and tolerance of our differences and imperfections, and patience as habits and patterns of thought are dealt with.

We proclaim **Relevant Truth**.

We hold scripture to be reliable and practical. We are committed to represent accurately what God has revealed in terms of his desire for humanity. We believe that the truths from the Bible apply to our lives today (Hebrews 4:12). We believe that we can find the best possible life in the pages of the Bible, and in order to do so, we must take God's Word as a whole and not be selective.

In light of the above, we affirm the following biblical values that relate to relationships, marriage and the practice of homosexuality:

- We believe that all persons are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and that image has been damaged by sin (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12-14,18). It is through repentance and forgiveness of sin, faith in Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit that we become a new creation (Romans 5:15-17).
- We believe in the God given uniqueness of marriage as between a man and a woman for a lifetime (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:7-8) and that God's plan for marriage is fulfilled when both parties submit to one another out of reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5:17).
- We believe that we are all called to love God and love our neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:4; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40). As followers of Jesus we are called to love and forgive others as we have been loved and forgiven (Matthew 18:23-35; Ephesians 4:32). Forgiveness does not mean ignoring or minimizing wrong behavior; we love others enough to encourage others to turn away from such (John 8:11).
- As with all sins, sexual sins set one apart from God. Repentance through faith in Christ is the way to healing that which is broken and reconciles those who live at odds with the Lord (Ephesians 2:1-5).
- The Bible, as our rule of faith and practice, speaks against practising homosexual behaviour (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and 1 Timothy 1:9-11).



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We believe that all unrepentant sinful behavior, within all areas of sexuality, not just homosexuality, is incompatible and inconsistent with the confession of Jesus as Lord. We also firmly believe that God desires to forgive and redeem, and we desire to assist all who are open.

We strive to avoid a double-standard which treats some kinds of sin, e.g. sexual sins, as being more serious than others. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Persons who are attracted to the homosexual lifestyle are welcome in our midst and are not to be singled out as any different from others who are within the community.

We recognize that it is possible to be attracted to someone of the same gender (same-sex attraction) and live in a celibate manner, thus pursuing godliness. Someone with same-sex attraction or temptations in that direction is not disqualified from ministry, however the practice of living in a homosexual relationship is a disqualifier at our church.

We affirm that singleness, either by direct or indirect choice or by circumstance, is a holy and acceptable lifestyle (1 Corinthians 7). We know that many singles live lives of service, satisfaction and wholeness.

This position paper, which describes our basic beliefs and practice, is not intended to be an exhaustive theological explanation of our view of homosexuality. If elaboration is needed, we welcome the opportunity to share more in a person-to-person conversation.