

Sexual Holiness, Wholeness, and Brokenness Task Force Report

Introduction

The questions regarding sexuality are weighty ones in our churches, cultures, and individual lives. They involve matters of meaning and identity, how we relate to and are related to one another; they reveal our capacity for deeply wounding one another and our longing for love. Our team has wrestled with these questions, seeking the wisdom of our God who is love through Scripture and our Wesleyan heritage. We prayerfully submit this report for the consideration and blessing of our new denomination.

The Gospel and Sexuality

Of all that exists in creation, men and women have been uniquely crafted to reflect the image of God, and each of us has been created for an intimate relationship with Him, who alone knows us and loves us perfectly. The Lord has also fashioned us to live in shalom with all of creation, as one author has put it:

“The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call *shalom*. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies.

In the Bible, shalom means *universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight...*”¹

Within the Lord’s design for human flourishing, wholeness, and delight are many ways to cultivate and experience intimacy. We can know others and be known through our deep friendships, family relationships, and in our connection as brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. The sexual union is another way to experience intimacy, which has been set apart distinctively from the beginning:

⁴He answered, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

Matt. 19:4-6 (ESV)

This one flesh union in marriage is part of a sacred, exclusive, covenantal relationship, and sexual activity outside of this is sinful and falls short of God’s design.

While marriage is intended to be an enduring commitment here on earth, it is not an eternal one, as there will be no marriage in heaven. (Matt. 22:30, Mark 12:25) Rather, it is a foreshadowing of the marriage we will all be a part of, at the great wedding between Jesus and the Bride of Christ, His church. (Rev. 19:7) Then we will all know Him as we are fully known. (I Cor. 13:12)²

Jesus’ death and resurrection bring hope for all who trust in Him to find renewal in the image of God. Note how John Wesley described this in one of his earliest of sermons:

“‘God created man upright; in the image of God created he him; but man found out to himself many inventions.’ Abusing the liberty wherewith he was endowed, he rebelled against his Creator, and willfully changed the image of the incorruptible God into sin, misery, and corruption. Yet his merciful, though rejected, Creator would not forsake even the depraved work of his own hands, but provided for him, and offered to him a means of being ‘renewed after the image of him that created him.’”³

¹ *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*, by Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Eerdmans (February 6, 1996)

² Thanks to Sam Allberry for pointing this out.

³ “The Image of God” by John Wesley, preached in St. Mary’s, the university church at Oxford, on November 15, 1730

Definitions

Sexual Brokenness – We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and all of creation is marred by the effects of sin (Romans 8:19-23.) Sexual brokenness is the result of our own sexual sin, which includes our thoughts and attitudes along with our actions (Matt. 5:28.) Sexual brokenness also occurs as the consequence of our being sinned against by (wounded by the sin of) others. Everyone has some degree of sexual brokenness which manifests itself in a number of ways⁴, including:

Adultery	Pansexuality	Sexual addiction
Divorce	Pedophilia	Sexual harassment
Failing to report or investigate sexual abuse	Polyamory	Sex outside of marriage
Homosexuality	Polygamy	Sexual sin within marriage
Incest	Pornography	Sexual stereotyping
Lewd remarks	Rape	Transgenderism
Lust	Sexism	Underage marriage
Non-binarism	Sex trafficking	
	Sexual abuse	

Sexual Holiness – It is God’s will that all people experience wholeness and live lives of holiness. This includes the stewardship and management of our sexuality within the Lord’s boundaries of reserving sexual union for marriage and practicing chastity when not in that covenantal relationship.

Vision for Ministry – Making Disciples for the Transformation of the World

What would the world look like if each of us obeyed the Lord in the area of our sexuality?⁵

It would mean a world without sex trafficking, without prostitution, a world without sexual abuse – within the church as well as outside of it. A world where fathers and husbands (along with mothers and wives) lived up to their calling, and the number of single parent families would be drastically reduced. This increased stability in the home would, in turn, contribute to a decrease in the prison population, improved education, and a number of other social benefits. Abortion rates would plummet, along with sexually transmitted diseases, leading to improvements in health. Toxic shame and loneliness would decrease, as sex without a life-long covenantal relationship would no longer be a contributing factor to either. The pornography industry would be bankrupt as a result of the decreased demand for the dehumanizing view of women, men, and children that Satan is trying to sell us, and a decreased supply of people willing to make and sell these things. Money formerly spent on sexual exploitation would be freed to help combat the pressing needs of providing clean water, nourishing food, and affordable housing. Advertisers would have to find new ways to hawk their products, while the value of a person would rise in dignity above their appearance. Relationships would be healthier among families and friends.

In short, obedience in this one part of our lives would go a long way in the transformation of the world that Wesley envisioned, with scriptural holiness being spread throughout the land, bringing flourishing, wholeness, and delight. Life without sexual brokenness would free us for deeper intimacy with God and with others. Intimacy with God, stirred up into expressions of love and good works in our gathering together (Hebrews 10:24-25), is what will transform the world of sexual brokenness which exists in and among us.

⁴ This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of examples of sexual brokenness, rather it is intended to highlight the vast scope of examples which can fit under this heading. Some of these examples refer to mindsets or attitudes, while others refer to actions that begin in the mind. We recognize there can be a number of complex factors involved in the origin of sexual brokenness due to the impact of original sin (Rom. 7:13-20), and none of these examples would exist if not for original sin.

⁵ Sy Rodgers asked this question while teaching at Calvary Chapel Chattanooga on Feb. 9-10, 2019.

Current Situation

What is currently not working in regards to addressing sexual brokenness in the church?

Silence in the Church

We rarely talk about sexual brokenness within the church, and ironically, we talk even less about the blessings of the restoration of sexual holiness. The “silent treatment” has been tried for decades, and it is not working for us. Churches have become a place to hide one’s struggles with sexual sins, rather than places of hope or healing. We often say the church is a hospital, yet when it comes to sexual brokenness we have mainly created waiting rooms where a few people get to see a specialist after long delays, while some never receive care at all.

Silence in the church is leading to / contributing to the following:

Mis-Categorization of Sexual Brokenness as a Marginal Issue

Statically and theologically, sexual brokenness is not a marginal issue. As noted earlier in this report, everyone has some degree of sexual brokenness, which manifests itself in a variety of ways. Sexual brokenness is more rightly categorized as a discipleship issue.

Empowering a Distorted View of Sin, Struggle, and Suffering⁶

When we are silent about sexual brokenness within the church, it creates space for bad theology regarding sexuality and gender⁷, including the following:

The Lord has nothing relevant to say about sexuality or gender in Scripture.

Christians do not struggle with sexual sin, nor suffer from the effects of sexual brokenness.

Sexual sin is more unacceptable before the Lord than other sins.

Sinning sexually within the church can continue without it being addressed.

Battling sexual temptations and denying self does not involve struggle.

There is no hope for those who struggle with sexual sin.

Sexual abstinence without relational connection is normal or acceptable in the Body of Christ.

Marriage is a reward for our obedience; singleness is a sign of being incomplete or spiritually immature.

We are created as sexual beings, so sexual fulfillment is my right.

Lack of Personal Accountability

Where does one go in the church when they are struggling with sexual brokenness? Can questions about sexual brokenness be asked without fear? When we are silent about sexual brokenness in the church, it leaves us with few places to be known, to build trust, to repent, to ask and find answers to our questions, leaving many in a cycle of repetitive sin.

Lack of Systemic Accountability

When we are silent in the church about sexual brokenness, it contributes to the impression that those in leadership are somehow immune to sexual temptation. Lack of accountability provides permission for continuous, unchecked sin. It also contributes to creating places for those with predatory, abusive behaviors to hide in plain sight in the church. We know the catastrophic damage sexual abuse within the church has had on thousands of individuals, and the impact it has had on our witness. When we use a culture of silence in an attempt to protect the institution above the individuals who are suffering within it, we are no longer serving the cause of Christ. The church is about ending this kind of corruption of power, and we must

⁶ “Sex and the Silence of the Church: How it is Crippling God’s People,” by John Freeman, Harvest USA, <https://harvestusa.org/sex-silence-church-crippling-gods-people/#.X0byuUI7nSQ>

⁷ “Gender” refers to our biological sex as male and female throughout this document.

take steps in advance to prevent sexual abuse by those in authority, and by anyone who has access to vulnerable individuals within our fellowship.⁸

Isolation

When we do not talk about sexual brokenness in the church, it creates an often agonizing barrier of isolation around each person. Ministry in this area often takes on a shallow form in recommending a book or only being directed to an agency outside of the church fellowship without also connecting and growing in the godly relationships which are needed to walk out one's sanctification. John Wesley has said, "Holy solitaires' is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness, but social holiness."

Isolation not only causes us to be unaware of the suffering of those around us, it also leaves us unaware of the victories of others in our midst. We are unable to benefit from the wisdom gained from those who have had years of walking through a similar minefield of temptation, and we may be left with the misconception that there is no way out. When non-Christians challenge us about the ways in which the Lord has directed us to steward our sexuality, we may be unaware of those in our own fellowship who were facing those same questions before finding answers in Christ. The isolation caused by remaining silent about sexual brokenness in the church stunts our growth as believers in Jesus.

Addressing & Ending our Silence⁹

"Who indeed shall recover us from the body of this death? Who shall restore our native immortality? We answer with the Apostle, 'I thank God, Jesus Christ our Lord!' 'As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive'—all who accept of the means which he hath prepared, who walk by the rules which he hath given them. All these shall by dying conquer the first death, and shall never taste the second.

The first step to this glorious change is humility, a knowledge of ourselves, a just sense of our condition... 'I say unto every man—not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.'"¹⁰

Addressing and ending our silence begins with taking an honest view of ourselves regarding the pervasiveness of sexual brokenness in our lives.

1. The real you is the you in the shadows.
2. The real you always shows up eventually.
3. The real you is the only you Jesus will deal with.
4. The real you is the you that Jesus loves.¹¹

As Wesley and Wilson remind us, this is the place where Jesus' love, and the expression of His love shown by our brothers and sisters in Christ who know us, can transform our lives.

Balanced View of Sin / Struggle / Suffering

⁸ See *Redeeming Power: Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church*, by Diane Langberg for an excellent treatment on this.

⁹ A huge debt of gratitude is owed to John Freeman, whose classic essay, "Sex and the Silence of the Church: How It Is Crippling God's People," is borrowed from heavily for this & the prior section of our report. John Freeman, "Sex and the Silence of the Church: How It Is Crippling God's People," Harvest USA, <https://harvestusa.org/sex-silence-church-crippling-gods-people/#.Xyw9ekl7nST>

¹⁰ "The Image of God" by John Wesley, preached in St. Mary's, the university church at Oxford, on November 15, 1730

¹¹ "When the Real You Suddenly Shows Up," by Jared C. Wilson, Blog: For the Church; April 9, 2018, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/when-the-real-you-suddenly-shows-up> Note: Our self-perceptions can be distorted as the result of experiencing abuse or other kinds of sexual brokenness, or through other cultural influences. This quote is referencing the "real you" as created and known by God.

Jesus is not surprised we struggle with sexual temptations, and He longs for us to run to Him when we do. A balanced view of sexual brokenness will include intentional, invitational preaching on how the gospel applies to our deepest struggles, temptations, and wounds, neither excluding nor exaggerating the sexual ones. Stewarding and managing our sexuality and gender is a lifelong learning process.

As followers of Jesus, we live in the tension of “the now and the not yet.” Living in this dual reality impacts what our transformation will look like, with some vulnerabilities lasting a short while and others continuing over the long term. Continued temptations in any one area do not indicate a lack of holiness, as Jesus Himself was tempted, yet did not sin. (Heb. 4:15)

In his sermon, “On Sin in Believers,” Wesley makes it clear that while sin remains, it need no longer reign in the life of the believer, and this is no less true of the sexual brokenness we all experience. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can ask the Lord to help us discern and take the way out of any temptation (I Cor. 10:13-14.) Knowing that He always has something better for us, we live obedient and open to whatever the Lord has in store for us relationally, not projecting an outcome into our future either of marriage or singleness, but trusting Him to provide for us each day.

Ending Isolation

Family of God / Body of Christ

In his book, *7 Myths About Singleness*, Sam Allberry writes the following about Mark 1:28-30:

“Jesus promises us family – ‘houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands.’ (And yes, a side order of persecutions too, whether we ordered it or not. That just comes as part of the bundle.)

It is an extraordinary promise. Whatever relational cost our discipleship may incur, however much family we may lose in the course of following Christ, Jesus is saying that even in this life it will be worth it.”¹¹

Also in Psalm 68:6, we read, “God sets the lonely in families...” (NIV). Allberry points out this is...

“...deeply challenging, because we’re the families of Psalm 68 in which God is placing the lonely. We are the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and sons and daughters that Jesus is promising in Mark 10. It makes Jesus’s promise quite unusual: there’s a sense in which it depends on us to fulfill it.

We see this reflected through the New Testament, where the church is repeatedly spoken of as a family.”¹²

The Lord’s design for us to be invested in one another’s lives is vital, and part of our witness to the world is in how well we love one another. (John 13:35) This love is to extend into our homes, as we are commanded to show hospitality (Romans 12:9-13, I Peter 4:8-9).

Within the family of God, we are one Body, consisting of many parts. (Romans 12:4-8, I Cor. 12:12-27) Our unity in Christ is not to be confused with uniformity. Rather than losing our individuality in coming to Christ, our gifts and talents, our personalities, our weaknesses and strengths are “indispensable” (I Cor. 12:22) in the Body. We therefore do not seek to conform to mere stereotypes of gender in our culture, but instead we submit our gender, which is a gift from the Lord, along with all of our gifts, talents, our personality, our weaknesses and strengths to Christ, who, as our master craftsman, has fashioned all of these things and prepared good works in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:4-10, II Cor. 4:7, Isaiah 64:8)¹³

¹² *7 Myths about Singleness*, by Sam Allberry, Crossway, 2019, pp. 67–68.

¹³ In practical terms, we recommend those who have gifts and talents be encouraged to nurture and use them for the glory of God, without the constraints of cultural stereotypes in regards to one’s gender. We find examples in Scripture of men gifted by God in the arts (Exodus 31:1-11, II Samuel 6:16-23) and women gifted in leadership (Judges 4-5, Acts 16, Col. 4:15, Romans 16:3-5.)

Recognizing Transformations

“Or is something within me still like a beaten army, fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?”¹⁴

The Lord is doing a great work in our day around the world, and when we choose to remain silent about sexuality in our churches we are missing out on the victories which have been and are even now being achieved. What many in the world think is rare, is rather common in the Kingdom - Jesus transforms lives, and this includes our sexuality. We can catch a little glimpse of this on the Two Prisms website.¹⁵ In the Spring of 2019, Shirley Baskett, who left lesbianism behind in her own life, established this website as a way for individuals who have come from backgrounds of transgenderism or of identifying as gay or lesbian to share their stories of transformation in Christ. As of the date of this writing, 154 people from 6 continents and 27 different countries have recorded their testimony there. Several of the members of this subcommittee have also come from backgrounds of same-sex attraction, and are grateful for the new life we have found in the transforming love of Jesus (Debra Baty & Rev. Garry Ingraham.) We are a small part of this global movement of God.

Jesus is bringing freedom in the lives of those who were addicted to pornography, and those who were once involved in making it. Marriages have been and are being restored, and the painful wounds of sexual abuse are being healed. In many cases, our apologetic for the Lord’s design for sexuality is living silently among us (Rev. 12:11.) Breaking our silence about sexuality in our churches helps us learn about the Lord’s redemptive work, and reminds us that this is the ordinary work of the church. Listening to these stories of transformation confirms that His ways are good for us, encourages us not only in our sexual stewardship but also in our struggle against any sin (II Cor. 1:3-5), and aids our witness to those who have questions about sexuality and gender in the world.

In the World – Of the Kingdom

In his recent article, “The Blood of the Faithful,” Dr. David Watson reminds us that when we put our trust in Jesus, we become citizens of another Kingdom:¹⁶

“There is, however, a true Christian nation: the church catholic. It knows no geographical boundaries, was established before time, and will exist after the mighty nation states of our day have fallen. It will exist after their successors have fallen and until Christ returns. The Christian nation ultimately serves one Lord, our sovereign King who sits eternally upon the throne and is worshipped forever by the heavenly host. Its citizens live in the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Kenya, China, Australia, Chile, Israel, Iran, and almost any other place you can point to on the globe. The skin color of our citizens is of every hue. Our languages are innumerable. We are, as 1 Peter says, ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’” (2:9).

In His prayer for us in John 17, Jesus describes us as being in the world, but not of it. He prays for our sanctification, to be set apart in the truth, and sends us into the world as His witnesses. Jesus deconstructs all of our cultural traditions, customs, and legalities as we learn what it is

¹⁴ *Letters and Papers in Prison*, “Who Am I,” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Collier Books, Macmillian Publishing Company, 1972, pg 347-338

¹⁵ <https://www.twoprisms.com/> Individuals were involved in homosexuality / transgenderism for 1 – 49 years, and have left those lives behind for between 6 months - 48 years. The degree of change of experiencing gender dysphoria / same-sex attractions ranged from none (one individual who left his gay identity a year ago) to 6 reporting “some change,” 68 reporting “significant change,” to 79 reporting “full change,” and counseling was reported to be beneficial for the majority. As noted on the previous page, a change in attractions is not a measure of holiness. As in all areas of our lives, it is what we do when we are tempted that matters.

¹⁶ “The Blood of the Faithful,” by David F. Watson, August 10, 2020, Firebrand, <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/the-blood-of-the-faithful>

like to live under His reign as the Lord of our lives, including our sexuality and gender. As Christians, we don't take our cues for our identity or our sexuality from the culture, regardless of what country we live in, nor do we define marriage by what is legal or illegal in any one country.¹⁷ When we remain silent about sexuality, we allow the culture to take the lead in discipleship by default.

The clash of cultures between the Kingdom and our earthly surroundings leads to all kinds of misunderstandings, peer and social pressures to conform to ungodly standards. Yet this conflict will also lead to opportunities to display the character of Christ among those who do not yet know Him. We can find encouragement for the adversity which arises from these conflicts from several places, including the early church and those in the Body of Christ who are facing severe persecution for their faith in Jesus in many parts of the world today (I Peter 5:9).

Sexual Counterculture

In his article, "What We Need to Learn from the Early Church," Timothy Keller reminds us that Christians were out of step with the sexual practices of the culture around them from the start:

Christians forbade both abortion and the practice of "infant exposure," in which unwanted babies were simply thrown out. Christians were also a sexual counterculture in that they abstained from any sex outside of heterosexual marriage. This was in the midst of a society that thought that, especially for married men, sex with prostitutes, slaves, and children was perfectly fine.¹⁸

Keller points out that while under this pressure, "...the early church thrived in that situation. Why?"

One reason was that Christians *were* ridiculed as too exclusive and different. And yet many were drawn to Christianity *because it was different*. If a religion isn't different from the surrounding culture—if it doesn't critique and offer an alternative to it—it dies because it's seen as unnecessary.¹⁷

One example of the tension our Christian sexual counterculture faces in many places in the world today centers around identity, particularly the idea that identity is based on the sexual attractions one experiences, or based on discomfort with one's gender. Although the experience of these desires is not new, the idea of attaching identity, or one's sense of personhood, to these experiences is new and was not something conceived of in John Wesley's day. Increasingly in the West, and spreading into countries around the world, this concept of identity is being written into our legal systems - equating desires with innate characteristics of one's being, such as race.

Keller brings the consequences of this to light:

"The earliest church was seen as too exclusive and a threat to the social order because it would not honor all *deities*; today Christians are again being seen exclusive and a threat to the social order because we will not honor all *identities*."¹⁸

All of us who come to put our faith in Christ wrestle with an identity crisis. There are many ways in which we identify with our sinful desires, telling ourselves that our anger or pride is "Just the way I am..." None of our old identities transfer into the Kingdom of God, and we all struggle with living out of our new identity in Christ. For when God sees us, He views us

¹⁷ For example, underage marriage is legal in several countries around the world (https://www.unicef.org/media/files/Child_Marriage_Report_7_17_LR.pdf), prostitution is legal in others, in many places authorities turn a blind eye to sex trafficking, while same-sex marriage is legal in others, etc.

¹⁸ "What We Need to Learn from the Early Church," by Timothy Keller, January 6, 2017, The Gospel Coalition, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-we-need-to-learn-from-early-church/>

through our new identity in Jesus, and we are to put off the old self and put on the new self (Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:9, Rom. 6:5-6, I Cor. 6:9-11, II Cor. 5:16-18.) Notably, the passage in I Cor. 6:9-11 specifically includes those of us who have experienced same-sex attractions¹⁹. Even when our temptations continue, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit we do not have to give into or identify ourselves by them. Instead, confessing those nagging temptations can draw us deeper into authentic fellowship with our brothers and sisters (I John 1:6-10), and deeper into the ever-more persistent love of God:

“I know all about the despair of overcoming chronic temptations. It is not serious providing self-offended petulance, annoyance at breaking records, impatience etc. doesn’t get the upper hand. No amount of falls will really undo us if we keep on picking ourselves up each time. We shall of course be very muddy and tattered children by the time we each reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean clothes are in the airing cupboard. The only fatal thing is to lose one’s temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present to us: it is the very sign of His presence.”²⁰

There are other examples of believers in Jesus facing pressure and persecution due to our Christian sexual counterculture around the world today. Those who refuse to engage in underage marriage, or who stand against sex trafficking, or the abusive practice of female circumcision are being seen as exclusive and a threat to the social order of their communities and culture as well. As part of an international fellowship of churches, we look to our brothers and sisters in Christ in the East, in Africa, and other parts of the world which have long undergone persecution for their commitment to Christ to help us in the West as we are facing increased pressure against following the Lord and His design for stewarding our sexuality and gender.

Integrating Ministry

As we are all coming out of our own cultural “kingdoms” into the Kingdom of Christ, ministry needs will differ from one region to another in our international fellowship. What may require courage to teach regarding sexual holiness in one place may be culturally accepted as a normal social practice in another. We encourage local pastors and congregations to work with like-minded para-church organizations (who agree with our doctrine) in understanding the sexual culture of / factors contributing to sexual brokenness in their area, recognizing appropriate resources to support our Christian sexual counterculture, and developing resources where they are lacking as needed.

Ministry needs are also diverse in regards to sexual brokenness due to the wide variety of manifestations of this brokenness. The needs of those who are recovering from sexual abuse differ from those of the perpetrators, which likewise differs from the needs of the parents of someone identifying as gay or transgender. Our recommendations, therefore, are limited in light of the scope of these needs, but Jesus is not limited in His knowledge of every person. The Lord has paid the ransom for every sin, He is able to heal every wound and redeem every life. The Holy Spirit is able to empower us to help support one another as we are sanctified, transformed, and made new in the likeness of Christ in the Global Methodist Church.

Sexual holiness is to be practiced at all levels in how we relate to one another and to God in the life of the church as we all prepare for the marriage supper of the Lamb, as the Bride of Christ. (Rev. 19:7-9) The ways in which we interact with one another as the Family of God and the

¹⁹ For more information on the fluidity of sexuality, please see chapter 9 of *Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion*, by Rebecca McLaughlin.

²⁰ From a letter to Mary Neylan dated Jan. 20, 1942, in *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Vol. 2*, by C.S. Lewis, Jan. 20, HarperOne, 2007, pg. 507

Body of Christ serves as a ministry in itself, both to us as we create the Christian sexual counterculture and as part of our witness to the world.

Catechesis – We recommend clear teaching on sexual brokenness and sexual holiness be addressed in our catechesis in age-appropriate ways. This clarity is important as we are coming from various cultures (of ethnicity, country, and family) into the Kingdom, and as we are moving from a church culture of silence into one of more open conversations on matters of sexuality and gender.

Accountable Discipleship

In the use of class meetings and band meetings, John Wesley has gifted the church with ways of meeting our need for systemic and personal accountability, further helping to end the negative impacts of silence in the church. We echo the recommendations of the Accountable Discipleship Task Force and make our recommendations in ministry regarding sexual brokenness in the areas noted below. (Heb. 10:24-25)

[Note: Please refer to the Report of the Accountable Discipleship Task Force for a description of the four “Spaces” for discipleship formation, “Public Space, Social Space, Personal Space, and Intimate Space” listed below.]

Public Space – Intentional, Invitational

1. Ministry in the public space of the Global Methodist Church includes intentional, invitational preaching on sexual brokenness and sexual holiness, expressing our commitment to walk with one another as we come to Jesus with our sexual brokenness. This includes sharing stories of transformation of those who were once caught in the grasp of sexual brokenness and those whose examples in Scripture of obedience in the face of sexual temptation serve for the encouragement of the church through the ages.

To contribute to a culture that is safe and welcoming as we experience sexual brokenness, sound teaching on gossip and judgementalism will need to be expounded upon frequently, along with our call to be trustworthy people of integrity.

We recommend these measures be supported by the development of resources for pastors, and by the prayers of each congregation for their leaders.

2. Ministry in the public space also includes intentional, invitational gathering as we seek to fulfill the promise of Jesus in Mark 10:28-30 by being the Family of God. (In a sense, every gathering of Christians can be a pre-union of our eternal gathering as family.) Every meeting is an opportunity to connect with and get to know others so that no one is left out of the love and joy that comes with knowing the Lord.

Social Space

Ministry in the social spaces of the Global Methodist Church involves continued interactions as the Family of God, fulfilling our roles in making use of our gifts and talents in the Body of Christ. As noted in the Report of the Accountable Discipleship Task Force, “Discipleship formation leverages the relationship-building potential of each of these kinds of groups by intentionally structuring some of these groups for deeper levels of engagement. Social spaces allow us to live lives of social holiness and to be known as Jesus’ disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35.)” This is no less true in regards to the stewardship and management of our sexuality.

Personal Space

Ministry in the personal spaces of the Global Methodist Church involves “instruction, immersion, care and accountability for each church member.”²¹ Participating in personal reflection, invitation and challenge, and accountability in these mixed-sex groups provides opportunities to practice our faith as we grow in Christ-likeness. Growth in sexual holiness in

²¹ Report of the Accountable Discipleship Task Force.

these gatherings can occur in a number of ways, as we cultivate our love for Jesus and reliance on the Holy Spirit who empowers holiness in every area of life. In meeting together we can learn the value of the gift of being uniquely made as men and women in the Imago Dei (Gen. 1:26-27), and build relationships as the family of God (brothers/fathers/sisters/mothers) over time, knowing others and being known. We also learn to have healthy general conversations about sex in these groups (as opposed to both the unhealthy ways which a person may have adopted in discussing sex in their past, and as opposed to the personal conversations about sexual struggles which are more appropriately had in the smaller Intimate Space/Trusted Space groups, noted below.) These groups also provide opportunities to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in addressing areas of sin in our lives such as hypocrisy, gossip, and looking down on others.²² Becoming more like Christ in these aspects of our character helps us to grow in the maturity and integrity needed for our smaller Intimate Space/Trusted Space groups.

Intimate Space / Trusted Space

Ministry in the intimate spaces, which we are calling “trusted spaces,” of the Global Methodist Church provides “deeper engagement around personal accountability, confession of sin, the affirmation of the forgiveness of sin through Jesus’ death and resurrection, and life change,”²³ which of course will involve sexual brokenness. The ability to talk and pray about areas of sexual brokenness can be considered a measure of the quality and effectiveness of our accountable discipleship groups. Naturally, being able to speak about our sexual temptations and sins in these groups requires trust, which takes time to build. Such trust can be built when there is clarity in the definition of terms we use regarding sexuality and gender. Given the stubbornness of sexual sin, a commitment to support one another for the long haul is necessary (Gal. 6:9-10, Phil. 1:6, Jer. 29:11). Critical also is understanding that while we are accountable to others, and are given the charge to restore one another gently in Gal. 6:1, each one is responsible for their own choices. And a focus on redemption and transformation will help keep us out of the ditch of legalism and mere behavior management. For forgiveness brings us back into a right relationship with God, restoring the joy of our salvation (Psalm 51:12). Each of these components will help ensure these small accountable discipleship groups remain a healthy and trusted space.

It has also been noted that knowing you will be heading to an accountable discipleship group meeting contributes to the prevention of sin.²⁴ And there is a growing hunger for prayer and discipleship in authentic community in the younger generation.²⁵

As we participate in accountable discipleship small groups, it is important to remember that these gatherings are not a substitute for counseling, and engaging with gifted and trained counselors will greatly benefit those experiencing many different manifestations of sexual brokenness. Others will benefit from any number of recovery and healing prayer programs.²⁶

²² Included in the 22 questions John Wesley developed for class meetings are questions about hypocrisy (#1), honesty(#2), gossip (#3), and looking down upon others (#18),

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/everyday-disciples-john-wesleys-22-questions>

²³ Report of the Accountable Discipleship Task Force.

²⁴ “The Power of Banded Discipleship with Dr. Kevin Watson,” Holy Conversations Podcast, Jul 30, 2020, <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVklmBvZGJlYW4uY29tL3dlc2xleWFuY292ZW5hbnQvZmVlZC54bWw/episode/d2VzbGV5YW5jb3ZlbnFudC5wb2RiZWFuLmNvbS84NDhmZmEyZi1mZmYyLTU1MmYtOTk1ZS00MjE3OTNiMWQyODM?hl=en&ved=2ahUKewirrPyTwL7rAhVOnOAKHepyCvYQjrkEegQICxAK&rep=6>

²⁵ “The Hopes of an Orthodox Wesleyan Millennial,” by Elizabeth Fink, Firebrand, Aug 31, 2020,

<https://firebrandmag.com/articles/the-hopes-of-an-orthodox-wesleyan-millennial>

²⁶ “Constructing a Wesleyan Theology and Practice of Inner Healing,” by Rev. Evan Rohrs-Dodge, Firebrand, Aug 17, 2020, <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/constructing-a-wesleyan-theology-and-practice-of-inner-healing?rq=prayer>

Yet it is also important to remember that counseling is not a substitute for Godly fellowship in the Body of Christ. Counseling and accountable discipleship can be woven together in the process of sanctification and transformation in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

Accountability Among Leadership

Tragically, we have all too many examples of the devastating impact of the sexual brokenness of Christians in leadership positions. As we launch into a new church connection, it is crucial that we learn from the mistakes of the past, including the ways that unchecked power and authority have contributed to sexual abuse in the church, and build in ways to prevent abuse at the systemic level in the future. We believe this to be a good time to review the use of programs such as “Safe Sanctuaries” for their effectiveness and to evaluate similar programs being utilized by other denominations and organizations, with those in our midst who are the most vulnerable to abuse as our central concern. More suggestions regarding this can be found under the Recommendations section below.

Christ in Us – the Hope of Glory

God’s plan in the restoration of all things through the abundant grace and sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross includes greater wholeness and holiness in our sexuality and gender. The power of the gospel extends even into the vast array of human sexual brokenness and subsequent identity confusion. This is indeed good news for the world and the global church, leading to human flourishing. Understanding the pain, trauma, temptation, and struggle so many experience through their sexuality and gender, we are full of joy, vision, and hope for the countless lives that will be redeemed and restored through the living out of this biblical and relational truth.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that the Global Methodist Church adopt a clear definition of sexual holiness and sexual brokenness in accordance with Scripture which includes an acknowledgement of our primary identity in Christ, and our identity as created in the image of God as biologically male and female. We recommend this definition be codified in *The Book of Doctrines and Discipline*. We have provided a working definition at the beginning of this report for review by the WCA Council, the Transitional Leadership Team, and the convening conference of the Global Methodist Church.
2. We recommend that seminaries approved by the Global Methodist Church provide students working toward ordination with coursework and training in the theology of sexuality and the body, and in personal spiritual formation in regards to their own sexuality and gender.
3. We recommend that continuing education on sexuality and gender be required of every pastoral leader in the Global Methodist Church.
4. Because sexual brokenness is a common temptation for every Christian, we recommend that sexual holiness, wholeness, and brokenness be considered a function of the Commission on Discipleship and Just Ministry.
5. In light of recommendation #4 above, we recommend the Commission on Discipleship and Just Ministry launch a task force to create resources for the wide variety of questions and ministry concerns which will arise regarding specific areas of sexual brokenness, relying upon those who have experience in ministry and/or personal growth in discipleship in sexual holiness in these areas. These resources are to equip local churches, pastors and laity, and could include, but would not be limited to:

- a. Intentionally embedding a theology of the body and sexuality with clear teaching on sexual holiness and sexual brokenness in the new catechism for the Global Methodist Church;
 - b. Resources for the integration of ministry for sexual brokenness and growth in sexual holiness into accountable discipleship groups, and for training leaders of accountable discipleship small groups;
 - c. An online network where annual conferences and local churches can share best practices, testimonies of transformation, and ministry examples;
 - d. Preaching resources for intentional, invitational teaching of how the gospel applies to the impacts of sexual brokenness in ways which are appropriate to the cultural context of the local church;
 - e. The promotion of the understanding that marriage and singleness are equally valuable in the Global Methodist Church, and the Kingdom of God;
 - f. The promotion of stewardship and management of our sexuality and gender consistent with the gospel as we grow in living as the Family of God;
 - g. A redemptive and grace-filled approach to ministry which avoids gossip and judgmentalism (Eph. 4:29), displaying the love of Jesus consistently in each space of church life regardless of one's experience of any form of sexual brokenness;
 - h. The promotion of the understanding that sanctification is a life-long process, empowering followers of Christ in supporting one another over the long term in all facets of discipleship, including our sexuality;
 - i. Resources for effective and Scriptural counseling for those with sexual brokenness which avoid the use of shame, force or negative reinforcement (Colossians 2:20-23);
 - j. Resources that address the specific needs of those impacted by abortion, sex trafficking, same-sex attraction, questions regarding their gender identity, and more.
6. We recommend the development of a course of Global Methodist Church Certification for Counselors to provide training in alignment with our theology in the areas of sexuality and gender.
 7. We recommend all ministry and church discipline in regards to sexual brokenness be redemptive in nature in the Global Methodist Church; and, that the Commission on Discipleship and Just Ministry develop and endorse guidelines and resources for the practice of church discipline in all areas of church life, including its application in regards to sexual brokenness. This should include a regular review of the practices of church discipline to improve the quality of this practice.
 8. We recommend that the Commission on Discipleship and Just Ministry conduct a review of the Safe Sanctuary program for its effectiveness, and evaluate similar programs being utilized by other denominations and organizations,²⁷ for the prevention of abuse and the protection of the most vulnerable among us. The Commission should then create a list of approved programs from which annual conference boards of ministry can choose, based on the needs of their region.
 9. We recommend that the Global Methodist Church through the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry include the following practices in regards to addressing abuse at the systemic level:
 - a. Adopt a policy of mandatory background checks for all people who will be working with children and youth, and commit to providing assistance for any church needing help to meet this standard. In countries where there is no

²⁷ I.e. - GRACE – Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment <https://www.netgrace.org/>, Speaking Truth in Love <http://test.speakingtruthinlove.org/>, and others.

- authoritative system in place to check backgrounds, we recommend that the Global Methodist Church pioneer in developing one;
- b. Develop, establish, and publicize protocols on how to respond to reports of abuse, including clarity on where in the hierarchy those reports can be made in the Global Methodist Church;
 - c. Retain access to teams of independent, multidisciplinary investigators trained and experienced with investigating cases of child sexual abuse in church settings. These teams would assist with independent investigations as the Global Methodist Church has need;
 - d. Establish systemic support for those who have been abused within the church, which would include assistance in healing emotionally and spiritually;
 - e. Establish systemic support for those who are in leadership which allows leaders to address their own mental health needs independent of pressures in regards to their ministry work, to be aimed at helping their spiritual and emotional maturity and the prevention of abuse;
 - f. Adopt the practice of reviewing all pastors and episcopal leaders for their potential abuse of position and power;
 - g. Develop and establish protocols regarding the restoration to a position of power for a person who has been found guilty of abusing their authority. Such restoration would include addressing the underlying concerns in the individual which led to the abuse outside of the trappings of the responsibilities of leadership. We also recommend this protocol prohibit the practice of shifting the individual to another position of leadership within the church as a means of covering up for their abusiveness.

Respectfully Submitted by the Members of the WCA Ministry With the Margins Task Force Subcommittee on Sexual Brokenness:

Debra Baty (Laity – Task Force Subcommittee Chair)

Garry Ingraham (Clergy)

Mark Ongley (Clergy, Pastoral Counselor)

Jerry Rectenwald (Laity)

Kyle Tennant (Clergy)

Resources

Summary Notice Regarding This Resource List:

Please note that the resources listed are weighted towards the areas those on this task force are most familiar with. We request that those who have had more experience with ministry in other areas of sexual brokenness be consulted for further recommended resources. Please also note that the inclusion of Reformed authors should not be interpreted as endorsement of Reformed theology.

Scripture

The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics by [Robert A. J. Gagnon](#)

Seeing Black and White in a Gray World: The Need for Theological Reasoning in the Church's Debate Over Sexuality, by [Bill T. Arnold](#)

Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis, by [William J. Webb](#)

"The Bible and Same Sex Relationships," by Tim Keller:

<https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the-bible-and-same-sex-relationships-a-review-article>

"Assessing *God and the Gay Christian*," a seven-part series by Joe Dallas:

<https://joedallas.com/?search=&s=Assessing+God+and+the+Gay+Christian>

Relating as the Family of God

The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World, by Rosaria Butterfield

<https://rosariabutterfield.com/the-gospel-comes-with-a-house-key>

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/podcast-christians-the-lgbtq-community-and-the-call-to-hospitality-rosaria-butterfield/?fbclid=IwAR1c3Hqg5q6Om0PIphLNC6CFWrHVSceeflBRu2ocLb9jjqCLivDPYmU0I>

Boundaries, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend

<https://www.boundariesbooks.com/>

From Bondage to Bonding, by Nancy Groom

Emotional Dependency, by Lori Renzel

<https://www.midvalleyfellowship.org/resources.html>

Sexuality

For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body, by [Dr. Timothy Tennent](#) (Advance copy reviewed by members of this Task Force.)

<https://my.seedbed.com/product/for-the-body/>

Our Bodies Tell God's Story: Discovering the Divine Plan for Love, Sex, and Gender, by Christopher West

<https://shop.corproject.com/collections/other-featured-products/products/our-bodies-tell-gods-story-discovering-the-divine-plan-for-love-sex-and-gender-paperback>

Into the Light: Healing Sexuality in Today's Church, by Mark Ongley
<https://my.seedbed.com/product/into-the-light-redeeming-the-churchs-discussion-of-sexuality/>

Pure Hearted: Banding Together for Sexual Wholeness, by Mark Ongley

Transforming Congregations: <https://transformingcongregations.org/>

“Love that Transforms: How Recovering the Story of Scripture Informs the Human Sexuality Debate,” by Dr. Susanne Nicholson, Firebrand Magazine, July 13, 2021
<https://firebrandmag.com/articles/love-that-transforms-how-recovering-the-story-of-scripture-informs-the-human-sexuality-debate>

Faithful: A Theology of Sex, by Beth Felker Jones

Strength in Weakness: Healing Sexual and Relational Brokenness, by Andrew Comiskey
<http://andrewcomiskey.com/resources/>

Hide or Seek: When Men Get Real with God About Sex, by John Freeman
<https://harvest-usa.myshopify.com/collections/books/products/hide-or-seek-when-men-get-real-with-god-about-sex>

Restoring the Christian Soul: Overcoming Barriers to Completion in Christ through Healing Prayer, by Leanne Payne

What God Has to Say about Our Bodies, by Sam Allberry
https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-myths-about-body-image/?fbclid=IwAR2j87GwUCD2zUwHqCXzGv2tJBrY-6nxXfp5t-LWlGT9mm_ux1xkleDLNA

Why Does God Care About Who I Sleep With? by Sam Allberry
<https://www.thomascreedy.co.uk/book-review-why-does-god-care-who-i-sleep-with/>

7 Myths About Singleness, by Sam Allberry
<https://www.livingout.org/resources/reviews/13/7-myths-about-singleness-a-review>

Rethinking Sexuality, by Dr. Juli Slattery
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2HLvuDsZRiM>

Identity in Christ Conference, featuring Timothy Keller and hosted by Living Out:
<https://www.livingout.org/resources/identity-in-christ-conference-interviews-talks>

Education on Sexuality for Children

Created by God, by James H. Jr. Ritchie

God's Design for Sex, by Stanton Jones, PhD., Brenna Jones, and Carolyn Nystrom
A series of books for ages 3-5, 5-8, 8-12, 12-16, plus a guidebook for parents.
<https://books.thedisciplemaker.org/godsdesignforsex-2/>

Transgenderism / Non-binarism

Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture, by Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky

Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today's Youth, by Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky

“Gender Resource Guide”

[https://genderresourceguide.com/wp-content/themes/genderresource/library/documents/NPRG Full Document Links V18.pdf](https://genderresourceguide.com/wp-content/themes/genderresource/library/documents/NPRG_Full_Document_Links_V18.pdf)

This "Gender Resource Guide" is aimed at helping parents concerned about how to respond to transgender ideology in their school system, but contains great information for everyone with questions about this issue.

Panel Discussion: "The Inequality of the Equality Act: Concerns from the Left"
Posted on Jan 28, 2019, this is a landmark discussion hosted by the Heritage Foundation. The panel includes non-Christian parents, medical experts, self-identified feminists, lesbians, and those who have detransitioned from a prior transgender identity voicing their concerns about the impacts of the creation of "gender identity" as a protected class and the dangers this poses, particularly to women and girls.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMj9MOuRswc>

Parents

Messy Parenting: Powerful and Practical Ways to Strengthen Family Connections, by Lori Wildenberg

<https://loriwildenberg.com/2016/09/12/12-vital-things-for-parents-to-say-to-their-gay-child/>

"Coming Out as Gay or Transgender: Five Things Parents Must Do" – a Four-Part Series by Harvest USA:

<https://harvestusa.org/coming-out-gay-transgender-parents-must-do-part-1/#.X0bHqkl7nSS>

<https://harvestusa.org/coming-gay-transgender-five-things-parents-must-part-2/#.X0bHykl7nSS>

<https://harvestusa.org/coming-out-gay-transgender-five-things-parents-must-part-3/#.X0bHkUI7nSS>

<https://harvestusa.org/coming-out-as-gay-or-transgender-five-things-4/#.X0bH20l7nSS>

Free Digital Curriculum for Parents: "Shattered Dreams, New Hope: First Aid for Parents Whose Son or Daughter Has Embraced an LGBTQ+ Identity"

<https://harvest-usa.myshopify.com/products/digital-download>

See also – "Gender Resource Guide" listed above.

Same-sex Attraction

Born Again This Way, by Rachel Gilson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqTYosrgNq0>

Gay Girl, Good God, by Jackie Hill Perry

The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert, by Rosaria Butterfield

<https://rosariabutterfield.com/secret-thoughts-of-an-unlikely-convert>

Messy Grace, by Caleb Kaltenbach

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIVO1L_HO56LQHrKUgvF3jqT4aqUZ9TI

All Things New, by Debora Barr

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAleXaVdY9M>

Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A Broken Mother's Search for Hope, by Christopher Yuan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW1zds3ybxQ>

A Change of Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption, by Becket Cook

<https://www.alisachilders.com/blog/a-gay-mans-story-of-redemption-with-becket-cook-the-alisa-childers-podcast-71>

Sexual Identity and Faith, by Mark Yarhouse

Panel Discussion: "Kevin DeYoung, Justin Taylor, Jackie Hill Perry, and Josh Moody" Feb 21, 2019. In this video, Justin Taylor, Kevin DeYoung, Jackie Hill Perry, and Josh Moody discuss issues related to homosexuality and the church.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tZh-Nn9X-8>

Message: "How to Care for a Pluralistic World with the Love of Christ" Jan 29, 2016 Dr. Mark Yarhouse, director of the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity (ISSI), addresses the Wheaton College community.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Lp7PLUKvm0>

Sexual Abuse

The Wounded Heart, by Dr. Dan Allender

<https://theallendercenter.org/offerings/>

Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse, by Dr. Diane Langberg

<http://www.dianelangberg.com/shop-books/>

Systemic Sexual Abuse

Redeeming Power, Understanding Authority and Abuse in the Church, by Dr. Diane Langberg (Advance copy reviewed by a member of this Task Force.)

Power has a God-given role in human relationships and institutions, but it can lead to abuse when used in unhealthy ways. Speaking into current #metoo and #churchtoo conversations, this book shows that the body of Christ desperately needs to understand the forms power takes, how it is abused, and how to respond to abuses of power.

<http://www.dianelangberg.com/shop-books/>

A Church Called Tov: Forming A Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing by Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer

<https://michellevanloon.com/2020/10/12/review-a-church-called-tov/>

What Is a Girl Worth?: My Story of Breaking the Silence and Exposing the Truth about Larry Nassar and USA Gymnastics, by Rachael Denhollander

"My Larry Nassar Testimony Went Viral. But There's More to the Gospel Than Forgiveness.

Former gymnast Rachael Denhollander spent years discovering God's perspective on sexual abuse. Then her advocacy for survivors cost her her church." Interview by Morgan Lee, January 31, 2018 posted by Christianity Today

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/january-web-only/rachael-denhollander-larry-nassar-forgiveness-gospel.html>

(Related – apology issued by Rachel Denhollander's former church in regards to the situation referred to in the CT interview above: <https://immanuelky.org/articles/we-were-rachaels-church/>)

GRACE – Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment

<https://www.netgrace.org/>

“Responding GRACE-fully To Abuse: A Conversation with Boz Tchividjian,” by Warren Cole Smith, November 14, 2019

<https://ministrywatch.com/responding-grace-fully-to-abuse-a-conversation-with-boz-tchividjian/>

Speaking Truth In Love

<http://test.speakingtruthinlove.org/>

Rebuilding Your Broken World, by Gordon MacDonald

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