

240 Your turn to respond

This is going to be a theoretical exercise, but with potentially important practical outcomes: I'd like you to think about a church (your own church, if you like) in which, following an Alpha Course or Christianity Explored, Adam, Brian, Clare and Diane, two gay couples,^[231,234] have come to faith and are getting more and more involved.

The church elders, PCC or whatever are being urged by the wider church authorities to discuss the whole sexuality thing. As part of a considerable amount of discussion, over many weeks, you have before you two proposals for a statement of your church's view.

Statement A: (wording culled from an Evangelical Alliance web page¹)

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.

Statement B: (wording cobbled together by me in ten minutes)

We affirm the special place of intimate sexual interaction within a life-long committed relationship, and we recognise the supreme importance of marriage between a man and a woman as a fundamental part of the fabric of society. However, after studying the Scriptures (including the Hebrew and Greek), we believe that there is insufficient evidence to say that, within a life-long commitment, same-sex relations are wrong – it should be a matter for the individual conscience before God. (This should be taken, please, in the broader context of ^[239].)

So what the implications? You are responsible, under God, for the effects of your council's adoption of one or other statement. How will your decision be viewed by, and affect, (a) Adam, Brian, Clare and Diane, (b) the wider congregation, (c) the 98% of the local community who don't attend your church, and (d) the fabric of society in general. What are the positive and negative implications in each case?

(Not to be taken too seriously but: A response form for your own use is provided overleaf – write in red for negative and blue for positive.)

Let's keep talking.

Paul Bev. 15.1.23

¹ <https://www.eauk.org/resources/what-we-offer/reports/biblical-and-pastoral-responses-to-homosexuality>

[illegible]