

Human Sexuality Report Listening Circle Report
to OSCRC Council

December 2021

We the members of the first Owen Sound CRC fall 2021 listening circle believe that the report of the committee to articulate a biblical theology of human sexuality should be read by many in the church, including church council.

The eight members of our group were enriched by it as we shared our very different responses to the document. As 8 retired individuals or semiretired individuals it was surprising and refreshing to see how different our perspectives were and how those differing views critiqued and illuminated the document.

Having the freedom to respond freely and openly within the confidential boundaries of our listening circle was a gift for each of us.

While there was a strong focus on the biblical theology of human sexuality, there was concern among the members of our group that even with the outstanding and frank analysis of the Song of Songs and its celebration of romantic physical intimacy, the document as a whole has a disproportionate emphasis on the many sexual prohibitions. That emphasis outweighs the positives of intimate, committed sexual relationships. It is unlikely that even couples experiencing difficulties in their intimate heterosexual relationships would find healing in this document - let alone anyone else.

We appreciated the excellent scientific appendices and the fairly objective assessments of them. The very frank review of the failures and harms of 'conversion therapy' for same sex attracted individuals was duly noted and appreciated.

Within our group, there was honest questioning that arose about which biblical norms are culturally conditioned and which ones are definitively normative forever. Woman being silent with covered heads etc. is something we regard now as culturally conditioned in Bible times. Is same sex sexual intimacy also culturally conditioned? On the one hand, same sex intimacy is widely and strongly condemned in scripture. On the other, a

committed same sex relationship could be considered a victimless sin; not doing harm to our neighbour,

The report emphasizes our need to be pastoral in our response to those who experience the many gendered variations of inclination to intimacy. By focussing on the sin, while steering us towards enveloping the sinners in fellowship, it seems to still leave us with a particularly difficult dichotomy to bridge. The report does not give us adequate tools to do so.

That is the main reason why the consensus among us was that this report should not be fully accepted by Synod. Our church pastors and elders need the tools to meaningfully engage with and minister to those struggling with same sex attraction and / or other relationship turmoil around sexual issues and related cultural or lifestyle difficulties.

All of us remember too many individuals or couples driven out of the CRC over issues like these. This study, eloquent and scholarly as it is, will bring none of them back and it will not appreciably staunch ongoing losses like these in the future.

We need to do better.