

## **Introduction**

This is a policy statement on the beliefs of Heights Worship Center International Ministries (HWCIM) in Hacienda Heights, California, regarding the issues of human sexuality and marriage and our policies based upon the necessary application of our faith to life and practice.

## **What We Believe About Human Sexuality and Marriage**

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures, that marriage is an institution established and ordained by God and intended to be a lifelong covenant union between one man and one woman. This understanding is supported by the account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 where God created man in His own image, both male and female, and together they were husband and wife and had “no shame” or sin in their union with each other (Genesis 2:15-25)

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ also re-affirmed this when He said in Matthew 19:4-6 “Haven’t you read, He replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

In the epistles, the Apostle Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not only a divine institution created by God, it is also a metaphor to illustrate the union between Christ and the church. Since marriage has such a profound meaning, the Scriptures teach the believers to stay pure sexually and flee from all practices that are sexually immoral (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Romans 1:18-22). These practices includes but are not limited to fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia, polygamy, and bestiality. Not only that, we see lewd conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation or distribution or viewing of pornography, behaviors that are incompatible with God’s original intention.

Based on the above religious beliefs, HWCIM is called to teach these scriptures and corresponding values and beliefs to our church community. Although we strive to live peacefully with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as marriage, we must ultimately obey God rather than man, if the two come into conflict.

## **Our Faith Based Policy on Human Sexuality and Marriage**

As a result of the above described religious beliefs and values, it is our policy that the facilities of HWCIM may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, supports, or allows any union of any nature that are considered biblically immoral (such as same-sex union, polygamist union, or any union which in some way constitutes child abuse). It is also the policy of the church that no pastor or member of the church staff shall officiate any ceremony designed to approve of or support any such union or ceremony.

At the same time, HWCIM recognizes that we all struggle with sin. Therefore, we hope to provide an environment that welcomes people who struggle with sexual sin, offering them a safe place to learn and grow in their knowledge and understanding of these Biblical scriptures and beliefs. We will show the love of Jesus to all who desire to attend HWCIM and point them to the forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and His resurrection, which also offers salvation and a new beginning in Christ.



### **Church Practices Derived from This Policy**

Clergy: Ordained clergy or licensed ministers employed by the church shall affirm the statement of faith on human sexuality and marriage adopted by this church.

Only ordained or duly licensed clergy approved by this church shall officiate marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.

Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal and/or loss of ordination for violating this statement of faith on human sexuality and marriage or by officiating a marriage ceremony that violates this policy.

Applicants for weddings performed by church staff: Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of our clergy or use of the church facilities for their wedding, shall affirm the statement of faith regarding human sexuality and marriage, and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Applicants shall participate in premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by this church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church, have the appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling. All pastoral staff, counselors or other persons providing premarital counseling shall affirm the statement of faith of this church on human sexuality and marriage.

### **Use of Facilities:**

Any marriage performed on church premises shall be officiated by an ordained or duly licensed member of the clergy. Any officiant not employed by the HWCIM shall serve at the discretion of the pastor or the Board.

Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the statement of faith on human sexuality and marriage adopted by this church and shall conduct them in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Clergy and staff assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his or her discretion, decline to provide church facilities for, and/or decline to officiate a ceremony when in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.

### **Membership, Leadership and Staff:**

Every minister, board member, or employee, hired by the church shall affirm their agreement with HWCIM's statement on human sexuality and marriage and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

The Board will be asked to affirm their agreement with this policy on human sexuality and marriage and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.

Church leaders, teachers and members are expected to teach and live in a manner that is consistent with this policy.

To read more regarding the policy and position of HWCIM regarding marriage, sexuality and other associated issues, please click the following links:

<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Homosexuality-Marriage-and-Sexual-Identity>

<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Transgenderism-Transsexuality-and-Gender-Identity>