

Affirmations Regarding Marriage

United Reformed Churches in North America (2018)

1. The holy bond of marriage was instituted by God at the very beginning of history.
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); Genesis 2:18)
2. Since husbands and wives are united by the Lord's hand, nothing should separate them in this life.
(Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:6; Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1))
3. Since the Lord forbids immorality, "each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband."
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); 1 Corinthians 7:2, 8-9)
4. God calls us to live "decent and chaste lives within or outside the holy state of marriage."
(Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108; Exodus 20:14; Ephesians 5:3-5)
5. Scripture teaches that marriage is the only acceptable context for sexual union.
(Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:4)
6. One purpose of marriage is that "husband and wife shall live together in sincere love and holiness, helping each other faithfully in all things."
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:21-25)
7. Another purpose of marriage is procreation, that "by marriage the human race is to be continued and increased."
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); Genesis 1:28)
8. A third purpose of marriage is that "by marriage the advancement of the kingdom of God is to be promoted. This purpose calls for loving devotion to each other and a common responsibility for the nurturing of children in the true knowledge and fear of the Lord, which the Lord may give them as his heritage and as parties to his covenant."
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); Genesis 1:28; Psalm 127:3; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Malachi 2:15-16)

9. "Marriage, then, is a divine ordinance intended to be a source of happiness, an institution of the highest significance to the human race, and a symbol of the union of Christ and his church." Our Lord Jesus declared that the one-flesh union of one man and one woman in marriage is rooted in creation, and the apostle Paul taught that it refers to the mystery of the gospel.
(Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1); Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 6:16-17; Ephesians 5:25-32)
10. Scripture teaches that marriage is designed to be a lifelong, monogamous covenantal union between one man and one woman.
(Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48; Proverbs 2:17; Mark 10:6-9; Ephesians 5:22-33)
11. Consistories shall instruct and admonish those under their spiritual care who are considering marriage to marry in the Lord.
(Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14)
12. Christian marriages shall be solemnized with appropriate admonitions, promises, and prayers, under the regulation of the Consistory, with the use of the appropriate liturgical form.
(Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48; 1 Corinthians 14:40)
13. Ministers shall not solemnize marriages that conflict with the Word of God.
(Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48)
14. Members of Christ's precious church must remain faithful to him and his Word above all other authorities regarding God's design for marriage.
(Acts 5:29)
15. Civil magistrates exceed their God-given authority when they attempt to bind a Christian's conscience contrary to these affirmations.
(Acts 5:29; Romans 13:3-4; Belgic Confession Article 36)
16. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead so that all who believe in him might live. All deviations from the biblical view of marriage are sins from which God mercifully calls men and women to repent. By God's grace and with faith in Christ, sinners can repent, be forgiven, and be renewed to a new life of obedience.
(1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:1-14)

Endnotes

1. "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," in *Liturgical Forms and Prayers of the United Reformed Churches in North America* (2018), page 84 [direct quote].
"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" (Gen. 2:18). All scripture quotes are *English Standard Version*.
2. "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen. 2:21-24)
"So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matt. 19:6)
"God gives a man and a woman to each other as husband and wife, and, as an institution of God, it must be held in honor among all. Since they are united by His hand, nothing shall separate them in this life." "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," page 84.
3. "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," page 85 [direct quote]. "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband... To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion." (1 Cor. 7:2, 8-9)
4. "What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment? That God condemns all unchastity, and that we should therefore detest it wholeheartedly and live decent and chaste lives, within or outside of the holy state of marriage." (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 108)
"You shall not commit adultery." (Ex. 20:14)
"But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph. 5:3-5)
5. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24)
"Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.' But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:1-2). "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (Heb. 13:4)
6. "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," page 85 [direct quote].
"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" (Gen. 2:18)
"[S]ubmitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." (Eph. 5:21-25)
7. "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," page 85 [direct quote].
"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" (Gen. 1:28)
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"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward." (Psalm 127:3)
"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother' (this is the first commandment with a promise), 'that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.' Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
"Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 'For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.'" (Mal. 2:15-16)
9. "Solemnization of Marriage (Form 1)," page 85 [direct quote].
"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24)
"He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'" (Matt. 19:4-6)

"Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." (1 Cor. 6:16-17)

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:25-32)

10. *Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48* [direct quote].

"[W]ho forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God." (Proverbs 2:17)

"But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'" "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:6-9)

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Eph. 5:22-33)

11. *Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48* [direct quote].

"A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." (1 Cor. 7:39)

"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14)

12. *Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48* [direct quote]. "But all things should be done decently and in order." (1 Cor. 14:40)

13. *Church Order of the URCNA, Seventh Edition, Article 48* [direct quote].

14. "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'" (Acts 5:29)

15. "But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men.'" (Acts 5:29)

"For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." (Rom. 13:3-4)

"We believe that because of the depravity of the human race our good God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies so that human lawlessness may be restrained and that everything may be conducted in good order among human beings. For that purpose he has placed the sword in the hands of the government, to punish evil people and protect the good. And being called in this manner to contribute to the advancement of a society that is pleasing to God, the civil rulers have the task, subject to God's law, of removing every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship. They should do this while completely refraining from every tendency toward exercising absolute authority, and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them, with the means belonging to them. They should do it in order that the Word of God may have free course; the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress; and every anti-Christian power may be resisted. Moreover everyone, regardless of status, condition, or rank, must be subject to the government, and pay taxes, and hold its representatives in honor and respect, and obey them in all things that are not in conflict with God's Word, praying for them that the Lord may be willing to lead them in all their ways and that we may live a peaceful and quiet life in all piety and decency. And on this matter we denounce the Anabaptists, other anarchists, and in general all those who want to reject the authorities and civil officers and to subvert justice by introducing common ownership of goods and corrupting the moral order that God has established among human beings." (Belgic Confession Article 36)

16. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'" (Eph. 5:1-14)