

**PRESS STATEMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY ISSUED BY THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA,  
SYNOD OF BISHOPS, CAPE TOWN 6 MARCH 1997**

**Our Church has recognised for some time that the expression of human sexuality is a matter of increasingly urgent pastoral concern.**

**Our Theological Commission issued a study document on the subject in 1995 and as a Church we still have a long way to go to come to terms with, and frequently even discuss, many aspects of human sexuality.**

**Homosexuality is such a concern. For many it is a matter of pastoral crisis. Others are scarcely aware of the urgency. Certainly as bishops we have no consensus on a number of the problems relating to homosexuality and we are aware that that same lack of consensus exists in our Church as a whole.**

**Where we do agree however is that as a Church we have been responsible over the centuries, for rejecting many people because of their sexual orientation. The harshness and hostility to homosexual people (gay and lesbian), still expressed by many within our Church, is neither acceptable nor is it in accord with our Lord's love of all people. We repent of this attitude and ask forgiveness of many homosexual people who have been hurt, rejected and marginalised because of this deep rooted prejudice.**

**We are also in agreement in our rejection of sexual promiscuity in all its forms. Promiscuity hinders the establishment of stable relationships and is usually an expression of selfishness and greed which is contrary to our faith, cheapening and even dehumanising many relationships. The fact that society tends to accept promiscuity does not, in our view, legitimise it.**

**The Church's position is that sex is for life-long marriage with a person of the opposite sex, for the purposes of companionship, sexual fulfilment and procreation. The reality is that divorce and remarriage, polygamy, same sex unions, single parent families, and persons living together outside marriage do exist. As a church we have to find loving, pastoral and creative ways of dealing with all these situations.**

**Many homosexual people worship in our Churches and participate in our corporate life. However, no authority exists within the CPSA for the blessing of same sex relationships, and this should remain the case unless the Church reaches a different mind on the subject.**

**Meanwhile we are aware that further study needs to be done within the Church on the subject of homosexuality and indeed of the whole range of human sexuality. In particular more work is required with regard to the Hebrew and Greek of the original biblical text, as well as the understanding of the issues involved in the witness of the Bible as a whole.**

**As bishops we are unhappy at the tendency in some quarters to attack homosexuals on the basis of simplistic interpretations of certain scriptural texts.**

**We commend the Studies prepared by our Theological Commission to debate, thought, prayer and listening to each other.**

**We undertake to continue to work towards a consensus on the subject of homosexuality. We are aware that whatever we say will please no one completely but we would be dishonest if we tried at this stage to force ourselves into an artificial consensus in order to satisfy public pressure.**