

# Same-Sex Marriage - Evangelical Alliance Briefing

The Scottish government recently launched its consultation on redefining marriage to include same-sex relationships and to allow religious ceremonies for civil partnership. From the outset the Evangelical Alliance - among other groups - has publicly criticised the Scottish government's intentions to redefine and devalue marriage and called on them to maintain the established societal definition of marriage which has universally stood the test of time.

Jeremiah 29: 7 says: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." The Evangelical Alliance believe we must earnestly pray and speak out with grace and truth for the retention of traditional marriage because it is part of our calling to seek the peace and prosperity of our nation; knowing that redefining marriage will have a huge detrimental impact on our society.

## Key arguments

- The God-ordained institution of marriage between one man and one woman, for life, for the rearing of children in a stable environment, is a cornerstone of society. It is embedded in history and in cultures around the world. Marriage has already been undermined in our society and the consequences are easy to identify. At this time of social fragmentation and instability, marriage should be strengthened for the good of all. The redefinition of the traditional values of marriage will further damage the well-being of our society.
- Marriage is the primary setting for children to be produced and raised by a committed mother and father. Overwhelming sociological evidence points to the benefits of marriage for children in terms of emotional security, educational achievement, health and other life prospects.
- Any redefinition of marriage will be promoted as standard by public bodies with significant implications across society, not least for what children will be taught in schools.
- In supporting marriage, we are not removing rights from anyone. Redefining marriage is not an issue of equality or fairness, as argued by those calling for this change. In the Scottish government's consultation document it is made abundantly clear that homosexual couples already have the rights of marriage available through civil partnerships.
- The number of civil partnerships in Scotland continues to drop every year. Last year only 465 same sex couples decided to have a civil partnership. It is estimated that a small minority of those who would consider a civil partnership would choose instead to get married.
- There is a very real risk of definition-creep. If marriage is redefined it will be only a matter of time before demands will be made to redefine marriage further to include, for example, polygamous relationships.
- It has been seriously questioned whether the Scottish government has the legitimacy and authority to redefine marriage.
- Any redefinition of marriage will have unforeseen consequences on religious celebrants who currently conduct marriage ceremonies. Many have already told the government that their position would become untenable. While the government have promised that no minister or church will be forced to participate, this could easily be undermined by future equality law (which is currently reserved to the UK government) or by decisions made in the courts.

## Key details of the consultation

- Find it online at: [www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/current](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/current) (scroll down to find "Registration of civil...")
- Final date for submissions is **9 December, 2011**
- The consultation is split into two separate sections; the first focusing on civil partnership being registered through religious ceremonies and the second on the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples. In this briefing we only look at how to respond to the redefinition of marriage.
- The government have made their initial view clear that they "tend towards the view that religious ceremonies for civil partnerships should no longer be prohibited and that same sex marriage should be introduced".
- You can respond to the consultation online or by email: [familylaw@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:familylaw@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or post to Sandra Jack, Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

## Key facts and figures

- Fewer than one in ten married parents have split by the time a child is five compared with more than one in three who are not married.<sup>1</sup>
- 60 per cent of people agreed that mothers and fathers both have their own unique contributions to bringing up a child and that it is important children have both a male and female parent.<sup>2</sup>
- A recent poll found that 83 per cent of people think family breakdown is a serious issue; over a third think it is very serious.<sup>3</sup>
- The US state of California legalised same-sex marriage but then overturned it after a referendum.
- Only around four per cent of countries across the globe have same-sex marriage.

1. Page 2, Strengthening the Family and Tackling Family Breakdown Fatherlessness, dysfunction and parental separation/divorce, Policy Paper by The Centre for Social Justice, Oct 2011  
2. 60% of those who expressed an opinion from a nationally representative YouGov poll of 1333 people carried out 28-30 April 2009, from Fathers not included: A Response to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill produced by the Centre of Social Justice  
3. Centre For Social Justice/ You Gov Poll of 2084 adults, September 2011

## Advice on responding to the consultation

- The Scottish government wants to hear from you. Please take this opportunity to respond as an individual, church or organisation.
- Fill in the Respondent Information Form at the beginning of the consultation to make sure your response is handled appropriately. If you do not wish for your name and/or address to be published on the Scottish government website say so at the bottom of the Respondent Information Form.
- There are 20 questions in the consultation but you do not have to answer every question. If your time is limited we would encourage you to only answer question 10 which asks whether the law should be changed to allow same-sex marriage.
- We would encourage responses from church leadership on behalf of a wider congregation as well as individual responses.
- If you have the time we would encourage you to read the responses and other resources from organisations such as CARE, Christian Institute and Solas (Centre for Public Christianity) which will all help and equip you to respond.