



Pastoral Letter On S377A

26 August 2022

Dear City Family,

As you are aware by now, it was announced that Section 377A of the Penal Code would be repealed during the National Day Rally, 21 August 2022. We were engaged in conversations with relevant government ministries in the past months regarding the complex issue and felt it was important to share with you a pastoral perspective on how we, the church, can respond in these polarising times.

It is important for us to acknowledge from the outset that this is not simply a legal issue, a civil matter or moral theological position to be discussed. It has profound implications on the lived experience of many in and outside of our community. For those with homosexual inclination struggling with the tensions of following Jesus wholly, to those of us who fear the push of LGBTQ activists on the legalisation of same-sex unions in our country, to those who feel anxiety toward the cultural environment and exposure their children will grow up in, this issue highlights to us the complexity of living with fidelity to God's Word and the way of Jesus in the midst of a broken and hurting world.

S377A AND ITS REPEAL

Section 377A of the Singapore Penal Code is a law which criminalises sexual activity between consenting males. It states "Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years.". While the government declared that it would not enforce this law, its stance was that the presence of this law still served as an indicator of its overall position: That a homosexual definition of marriage or sexual relationship was not to be normalised in society.

The intention to repeal S377A, however, was announced last Sunday in efforts by the government to bring about a balanced way forward in light of differing viewpoints within our secular society. Alongside its repeal, Prime Minister Lee also declared the nation's definition of marriage as a traditional one — between one man and one woman. A definition which would continue to be supported by national policies including housing, education and media. A reference to the Women's Charter was further announced to be amended into the Constitution as means of protecting this definition of marriage from challenge in court and keeping it as a parliamentary matter.

While we are grateful for this amendment, we feel disappointed in the lack of safeguards established before the repeal of S377A, namely, to entrench the definition of marriage in the constitution to prevent future challenges.



OUR RESPONSE

As followers of Jesus and citizens with civil responsibility, we should desire the common good for all — which are the conditions where individuals, marriages, families and society flourish following God's created design. We should not be silent but be a faithful witness in engaging the public and social square to promote this common good.

However, our response to this issue must transcend an expectation for our secular government to adopt our Christian worldview and its standards. We believe God is sovereign over our land, our lives and that authority is divinely appointed. We also recognise that we are citizens of the city of man, and the city of God — where our trust, hope and longing is ultimately placed in God's Kingdom beyond this temporary one.

Hence, more than increased activism, there is a higher call here — for the Church to regain a vision of its role as an embodiment of the common good we promote and look toward. This is a moment for sober reflection and hopeful conviction. As society looks to the Church as a representation of God's nature and creative design, we must do more than vocalise our views, but aspire for our lives to witness to Jesus. Jesus, in a time like this, would comfort the fearful and worryful, yet show a distinct love for His enemies. Jesus would teach His disciples truth, but be found eating and drinking with sinners and outcasts.

AN URGENCY TO GROW

In our endeavour to be an embodiment of truth and love, we feel the urgency to grow in these areas:

(1) We must be champions of God's blueprint for marriage and families.

We see the church as a representation of God's order of creation for flourishing and fruitfulness. More than an institution, the union between a man and a woman is an intimate community of life and love, where partners complement each other. This order of love and family, authored by God, is critical for the greater good and stability of society. We must strengthen support to couples and families; providing guidance, counsel and help where needed.

(2) We must be active in discipling the younger generation on contentious issues such as sexuality and gender.

Our children and young people are growing up in an environment with increased access to ideas too demanding for their levels of maturity to handle. The repeal of S377A and continual push from different factions of society with different viewpoints further emphasise this need. To that end, we look to equip our members to grow in language and understanding of these matters; to disciple our children better with healthy views of sexuality and gender.



(3) We must embody God's love for the LGBTQ and same-sex attracted.

We recognise the need for intimate companionship, identity and fulfilment to be intrinsic to the human condition. We empathise and feel for those of us who struggle reconciling their sincere love for God with His plan for sexuality as offered in Scripture. All people are worthy of dignity, compassion and respect. No one deserves unjust discrimination and prejudice.

As The City, we desire not to be pharisaic and to judge from afar, but to be like our Shepherd — Jesus Christ, who draws near to the sinner in all of us and wants to lead us on His path of righteousness. In that regard, we endeavour to welcome all people, regardless of sexual orientation, to embrace a life of surrender and devotion to God where true life, in all its fullness, can be found. We invite all of God's children to walk the path of deep discipleship together in our community. We have an earnest desire to grow in our pastoral capacity and resource to this end.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

While we are burdened by the repeal of the law and its implications for future generations, we continue to put our hope in the Kingdom of God which is to come. As a church, we commit to grow in our witness of marriage, discipleship of our young, and pastoring of those who struggle with sexuality.

We yearn to help all people draw close to Jesus and follow His example wholeheartedly in these complex times.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Andre Tan