



**SAME-SEX MARRIAGE
AND HOMOSEXUALITY**
(THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S RESPONSE)
**CLARIFYING THE ONLINE BLOGOSPHERE
ATTACK AGAINST COGIC**

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECLARATION AND APOLOGETIC OF MARRIAGE

(A Biblical Response to Same-Sex Marriage)

Let it be known by men everywhere, that the General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ, Inc., has adopted this thirteenth day of April, year of our Lord, two-thousand and four, in Memphis, Tennessee, this Proclamation on Marriage.

We, the Presiding Bishop, the General Board and the Board of Bishops of the Church of God in Christ, solemnly proclaim that the institution of marriage was established and ordained by God (Genesis 2:24). Therefore "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). He created "the woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:9). Therefore, "marriage is honorable" (Hebrews 13:4).

We believe that since the beginning of recorded history, in most cultures of the world; marriage has been defined as the lawful union of one man and one woman. The traditional form of marriage is one of the bedrock institutions of most societies. We, therefore, affirm the preservation of the present definition of marriage as being the legal union of one man and one woman as husband and wife.

We believe that, "Children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward." (Psalms 127:3). In order to provide for continuation of the species, God created within male and female the potential for bearing children. The first commandment given to Adam and Eve was to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Genesis 1:28). Marriage between male and female provide the structure for conceiving and raising children. Compliance with this command of God is a physical and biological impossibility in same-sex unions. We, therefore, believe that only marriages between male and female, as ordained by God, is essential for the procreation of mankind.

We believe that the homosexual practices of same-sex couples are in violation of religious and social norms and are aberrant and deviant behavior. We believe that these unions are sinful and in direct violation of the law of God in that they are a deviation from the natural use and purpose of the body. "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which is due." (Romans 1:26-27 NKJV). We believe that to legalize such unions will signal ecclesiastical and social approval of homosexuality and sexual deviancy as legitimate lifestyles.

Therefore, in spite of the progressive normalization of alternative lifestyles and the growing legal acceptance of same-sex unions; we declare our opposition to any deviation from traditional marriages of male and female. Notwithstanding the rulings of the court systems of the land in support of same-sex unions; we resolve that the Church of God in Christ stand resolutely firm and never allow the sanctioning of same-sex marriages by its clergy nor recognize the legitimacy of such unions.

2008 Faith in Human Rights Statement

Preamble

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 2008, we, representatives of various world religions,

are gathered at the Peace Palace, seat of the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, The Netherlands, to pronounce and confirm that our religions recognise and support the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every human person, alone or in community with others.

It must be acknowledged that sadly enough religion sometimes is being misused in a way which violates human rights. But now, while representing different faith traditions, we come together in unity to stress that religion has been a primary source of inspiration for human rights as our sacred writings and teachings clearly show:

“Someone who saves a person’s life is equal to someone who saves the life of all.” (Qu’ran 5:32);

“A single person was created in the world, to teach that if anyone causes a single person to perish, he has destroyed the entire world; and if anyone saves a single soul, he has saved the entire world”

(Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5);

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27);

“Let us stand together, make statements collectively and may our thoughts be one” (Rigveda 10:191:2);

“Just as I protect myself from unpleasant things however small, in the same way I should act towards others with a compassionate and caring mind” (Shantideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life);

“Let us put our minds together to see what life we can make for our children” (Chief Sitting Bull, Lakota).

We recognise our responsibility towards our believers and to the world at large and reaffirm our intention to take all necessary steps both within our communities and in co-operation with others to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for each and every person, irrespective of religion or belief.

Therefore, we solemnly state to take to our heart the following achievements, challenges and commitments:

I Human Rights: Achievements

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates the dignity of the human person, irrespective of religion, race, sex or other distinctions. As such it helps realise our shared vision of a religiously and

culturally diverse world community striving together to promote and defend the rights and dignity of all. The Declaration has stimulated and inspired a new standard setting and good practice at national and international levels. We wish to emphasize the importance of two of its principles: that every person enjoys the freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of religion or belief.

2. States bear the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights. However, we wish to underline that everyone has duties to the wider communities of which they form a part and only in which the free and full development of one's personality is possible. It is therefore important to make all people aware, through information and education, of their human rights and also of the common responsibility to make human rights a reality. In this regard we commend the valuable contribution of many religious and civil society organisations.

II Human Rights: Challenges

3. We express our deep concern that despite all achievements, the enjoyment of human rights in today's world remains a distant reality for many. Human rights violations cause innocent people to die or to be seriously harmed resulting in untold suffering, loss and hardship. More than ever, in this world threatened by racial, economic and religious divisions, we need to defend and proclaim the universal principles of dignity, equality, freedom, justice, and peace, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Challenges to the acceptance of human rights and fundamental freedoms

4. The rights, freedoms and obligations laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are recognised all over the world. Nevertheless, they are not fully accepted everywhere. We observe tensions with regard to a number of specific rights, such as the freedom of religion or belief, the principle of equality and the prohibition of torture. We wish to state clearly that the Declaration should not be regarded as a 'pick-and-choose' list. There is an urgent need for a thorough reflection on the integral acceptance of each right.

Challenges to the interpretation of human rights and fundamental freedoms

5. Human rights are open to a variety of interpretations. The argument of cultural relativity of human rights is at times used to justify grave violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We therefore recall the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on Human Rights, wherein all States of the world agreed that "all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. (...) While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms." This implies that a continued dialogue is necessary among government representatives, religious communities, indigenous peoples and independent experts based on a dynamic interpretation of human rights.

Challenges to the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms

6. Peace and security are essential conditions for the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Whilst States are entrusted to guarantee the peace and security of their societies and their citizens, this should not lead to curtailing basic human rights. We denounce the development of security measures and means that endanger human life rather than protect it, for example the tremendous worldwide expenditures on weapons. This life-threatening devastating power makes it imperative to look for peaceful means of resolving tensions.

7. The prevalence of violence within the international and national communities remains a source of serious concern and impedes the realisation of human rights. We call on all concerned to pursue all peaceful means of redress and to refrain from a misuse of violence. In addition, we wish to highlight the problem of structural violence within society and of domestic violence in particular. It is of utmost importance to counter this and to save by so doing the lives of the most vulnerable among us.

8. We note with serious concern the increase of intolerance in matters relating to religion or belief, of cases of incitement to religious hatred, overt or covert. While emphasising the importance of the freedom of expression, we deplore portrayals of objects of religious veneration which fail to be properly respectful of the sensibilities of believers. We consider the freedom to have, to retain and to adopt a religion or belief of one's personal choice, without coercion or inducement, to be an undeniable right. Furthermore, the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief in any form of worship, observance, practice and teaching may only be subject to carefully defined limitations consistent with generally accepted principles of international law.

9. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights demands meeting basic human needs. The abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty to which more than a billion people are currently subjected, must be decisively altered. The human destruction of the environment has to be stopped. The process of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (eight targets that 189 countries have pledged to meet by 2015) represents a key indicator of the commitment of States to realise human rights for all.

III Commitments

10. Adherents of various faith traditions have striven to protect human dignity. Religion has to stand for peace, reconciliation, universal values, mutual respect and upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our faith traditions have been and are capable of providing inspiration and guidance towards realising these aims. We wish to reiterate our commitment to respect all human rights for all, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The contributions that may come from religious inspiration and from the structures of religion or belief towards a fuller implementation of human rights include the need to:

study carefully our holy scriptures and teachings and to explore the theological rationale in defence of human rights; provide responses where harm has been done in the name of religion and seek ways of forgiveness and reconciliation in order to foster mutual respect and understanding among our communities;

address major threats to the full realisation of human rights by fostering concepts of peace, security and development that advance the full realisation of the Millennium Development Goals and make our shared world a safe place to live; listen to the suffering of individuals, families and communities and assist them to tell and visualize their stories so that empathy may lead to solidarity and action; encourage religious communities to become further engaged with human rights issues, both within and outside their community, and stimulate interfaith co-operation with mutual respect.

Conclusion

12. Humbled by the authority that is vested in the religions of the world and conscious of our shared responsibility to defend human rights, we fervently desire that this Statement will initiate a wider process, and will become a catalyst for transformation and change. In order to widen and deepen the support for human rights by religious communities we invite religious leaders around the world to endorse this Statement. We call upon believers everywhere to disseminate this Statement as widely as possible and act upon it.

Statement on the Faith in Human Rights Declaration

In recent days, the internet has been the sparring place for a blog riddled with misrepresentations and errors regarding the Presiding Bishop and the right to defend liberty in the face of war, terrorism, the wholesale slaughter of human life. The ceremonial signing of the Faith in Human Rights Declaration document, which convened last December, 2008, at the Hague, Netherlands, was a historic moment for Pentecostal Christianity around the world. The United Nations sponsored-event was a commemoration of a similar document written 60 years prior when the world, on a more global scale, was confronted with wars, dislocation, and victimization of the least among us. Marking this historic moment in world events, it called for the repudiation by world-religious leaders, who among their tenets of faith, hold to a common principle that respects the right to live without fear of lost of life. This, again, is specific to the context of 60 years ago. Given the current global affairs that so mirror 20th century conflicts and strife around the world, the Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake, through an emissary, unapologetically, represented the ethical and moral position of Pentecostal Christianity, by declaring our obligation to stand against the ravages of war, terrorism, and the casualties of human lives innocently caught in the middle of conflict.

The blog so recklessly, irresponsibly, and superficially, wrote about this important historic moment for Pentecostal Christianity, and chose instead to highlight, interject, and infer, what any rationale thinking person who reads the declaration would never have concluded. The interjection and inference of homosexuality and the rights for gay marriage was a gross exaggeration and literary leap for truth that is incomprehensible, immoral, and reflects all that is wrong with the witness of the Church to the world we seek to win for Christ! This is truly lamentable.

The Church of God in Christ consistently, utterly rejects and uncompromisingly denounces the practice of homosexuality. Our biblical interpretation of the sanctity of marriage as a sacred relationship between a man and a woman uncompromisingly views homosexual relationships as a contradiction and violation of the biblical teaching on marriage and are strongly condemned in the scriptures." (Romans 1: 26-27; Leviticus 18:22; 1 Co 6:9-10, 1 Kings 14:22-24 Ephesians 5: 25, 32-33). Furthermore, this statement is in accordance with the policy on Same Sex Marriage adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of God in Christ (read www.cogic.org)

The Church of God in Christ' support of human rights: all humans, as God's creation, advocates for the right to adequate education and healthcare, a living wage, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, democracy, life, security, right to own property, the right to vote, and freedom from slavery. **Presiding Bishop Charles E. Blake Sr., as a pastor, diocesan leader, and spiritual leader of the denomination, has repeatedly affirmed his unequivocal support of the church's position on these matters. (James 1:27)** But, it is not just a matter of towing the line with the denomination, it is a matter of his own conscience and moral underpinning that guides his decisions regarding this matter.

Further, the Church of God in Christ does not endorse, embrace or in any way affirm any religion, any spiritual beliefs or positions that are not in accordance with biblical Christianity. In signing the Faith in Human Rights declaration we in no way enter a religious union with any religion or spiritual teaching which is contrary to biblical standards (John 14:6). We, nevertheless, believe that in the proper context interfaith dialogue that can promote justice and freedom for the oppressed and poor is important for us as Christians who are called to live in the world, even as we are not of the world (I Corinthians 5:9-10).

In 1948, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights was written and adopted by the UN General Assembly. It was a landmark document basically declaring that all people on the earth, wherever they live, and whoever they are, should be treated with dignity and justice. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was a beacon of hope for many of our own ancestors and older generations because for the first time a worldwide statement against racism and oppression of people (especially people of color) in the world by cruel tyrants was written and recognized on the world stage.

The Faith in Human Rights document, signed by Presiding Bishop Blake and nine other global religious leaders, was written sixty years later to reaffirm the tenants of the original document. Neither document makes any reference whatsoever to same sex marriage or homosexual rights. The practice of homosexuality is a preference, and therefore cannot be considered a human right. On the contrary, it is a human wrong.

The “Faith in Human Rights” document affirms the dignity of all people, who have been created in the image of God. The “Faith in Human Rights” statement reads, “we recognize our responsibility towards our believers and to the world at large and reaffirm our intention to take all necessary steps both within our communities and in cooperation with others to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for each and every person, regardless of religion or belief.”

Therefore, it is quite clear that the “Faith in Human Rights” document intends that as religious people of the world, based on our own religious beliefs (in our case, the Holy Bible), we uphold human rights. Injustice, inhumane treatment and violent oppression are not what God, our Father, in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit desires perpetrated on anyone, believer or non believer.

As committed Christians, the Church of God in Christ upholds this godly standard and solidifies our place and position on the global stage in framing and representing Christ to the world from our stream of Pentecostalism. (Matthew 25:31-46)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political,

jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3.

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4.

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5.

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6.

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7.

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8.

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10.

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11.

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor

shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14.

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15.

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16.

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17.

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20.

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21.

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22.

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23.

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24.

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27.

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29.

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and

freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

IN DEFENSE OF THE “FAITH IN HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION

Dr. David A Hall
Presiding Bishop’s Emmissary to the
Editor/Publisher of Whole Truth Magazine
CEO of COGIC Publishing House

The Declaration endorsed by the Church Of God In Christ on December 10, 2008, in the Hague of the Netherlands, commemorated the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration presented the Church Of God In Christ an opportunity to step upon the world’s stage and interact with individuals of other religious traditions. Presiding Bishop Charles Blake honored me to attend and sign the International Declaration as his personal emissary. The Church Of God In Christ expressed, by my signature, that it will proclaim moral and spiritual faith are pertinent in solving the critical problems of human civilization. The Church was not reactionary or illogical with its decision to sign and endorse peace. For the record, the Church Of God In Christ spoke with a clarion voice that human rights and civil rights are a part of the blessing that God grants his creation. Being a predominantly black denomination we are sensitive to and ready to support the suffering humanity of the world whenever possible. The Faith in Human Rights document that I signed speaks for itself, and there is not one line that explicitly or implicitly supports homosexual agenda.

The web page, gcmwatch.com grossly exaggerated and misrepresented the whole situation. There is an obvious bias and ulterior political agenda and was written with a basic lack of honesty. Finally, the web page has done a disservice to the millions of people across the globe who have suffered due to a fanaticism within the context of their religious tradition. The Hague group had no other agenda than the signing of a declaration that would speak to religious organizations and inspire them to decisively eliminate those fanatical influences over their practitioners. Religion must never be used as a source for intolerance, hatred, and terror. The Faith in Human Rights document states, “Adherents of various faith traditions have striven to protect human dignity. Religion has to stand for peace, reconciliation, universal values, mutual respect and upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our faith traditions have been and are capable of providing inspiration and guidance towards realizing these aims. We wish to reiterate our commitment to respect all human rights for all, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Presiding Bishop Blake sent me to do exactly what Jesus did. Jesus sat with people of religious traditions and discussed the highest principles for solving the critical problems of humanity. He was scorned for sitting with non Jews or those not considered righteous.

Most people with the rationale demonstrated on the website are possibly good political Christians. I am glad the leader of the Church Of God In Christ sees the suffering, the abuse, and the fanaticism which currently engulfs the globe as a moral issue first. The writer of the website misquoted the Tri-State Defender newspaper and paints a dubious picture. The writer erroneously said the human rights document was about gay rights and gay marriage. Read the document for yourself! There is not one line explicitly or implicitly mentioning gay marriage or

gay rights. Next the web page stated the Commercial Appeal newspaper of Memphis, Tennessee did not run the story. A photo and writeup appeared in the faith and values section, Saturday, December 27, 2008. The photos demonstrated the wide diversity of religious traditions. Of course, people of different faiths should have the capacity to sit and talk to one another as creatures of God without giving up principle and calling. The writer seems to be of the school of the misinformed and highly inflammatory. It is sad that technology has afforded someone of such base character the opportunity to spread ignorance and do violence to honorable people of faith. Even though some of the signatories were not Christians, they have a right to human rights, dignity, and peace.

The Church Of God In Christ believes that it is imperative that we speak the trues of Jesus, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." The author of the web page called me a liar and put me under a scrutiny that is totally unjustified and erroneous. I will only lean on what Jesus said, " Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake." His grace, the Presiding Bishop of the Church Of God In Christ, Charles Blake, is propelling the Church Of God In Christ forward to be the highly anointed, fresh and redeeming presence that the Church Of God In Christ should be. I pray for his strength under these needless and brutal attacks.

I can say without a doubt that traveling to the Hague has been a highlight in my life. I have studied for years, the situations around the world that we see daily on the news reels: nuclear non-proliferation, terrorism, the unending conflict in the Middle East, the starvation of children, the hopelessness and despair of political chaos, all need a spiritual remedy. While in the Hague, these issues were the chief subjects that the delegates spoke about. With God as my witness, not one person spoke about homosexuality and its issues. In fact to my knowledge I never saw one item with a homosexual emphasis. The Church Of God In Christ knows it is time for religious persons to have an agenda that will allow our various traditions to heal, reconcile, create solidarity and stimulate intrafaith and interfaith, cooperation among the people of the world. For us Christians, the Holy Spirit has sovereignty and is controlling our positive pursuit in these endeavors.

The Reverend Oscar Owens
Director of Christian Education
West Angeles Church

My response to gcmwatch.com blog d3

Brother Foster I am deeply hurt by the lies you are telling about my Pastor and Presiding Bishop. I may be mistaken, but I believe I have met you in the past, at a conference, where you spoke of your book that describes your journey out of homosexuality to holiness and sexual purity. At that time you seemed a kind person so I am doubly surprised by the rancor of the lies you are spreading about Bishop Blake. In the title of your blog article, "Bishop Charles E. Blake endorses gay marriage declaration" you are telling a malicious lie. Bishop Blake does not, and never has endorsed gay marriage. Not at any time in the 18 years that I have heard him preach

has he ever supported or endorsed gay marriage or homosexuality. He has consistently taught and affirmed the Word of God in the Old Testament and New Testament that homosexuality is a sin which saved and sanctified Christians must forsake through the saving power of the blood of Jesus and the delivering power of the Holy Spirit. Bishop Blake would rejoice in your own deliverance from homosexuality to holiness and sexual purity and he consistently teaches that the only God blessed sexual relationship for born again, Holy Spirit filled saints, is within the holy wedlock of marriage between a Christian man and woman.

Bishop Blake's endorsement of "the Faith in Human Rights" statement is not an endorsement of gay marriage, absolutely not! The "Faith in Human Rights" document does not refer to gay marriage or gay rights at all, implicitly or explicitly. It does not imply an affirmation of gay marriage, not at all. The "Faith in Human Rights" document was developed to bring world religious leaders together to affirm the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights which was written 60 years ago. In 1948, the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights was written and adopted by the UN General Assembly. It was a landmark document basically declaring that all people on the earth, wherever they live and whoever they are, should be treated with dignity and justice. The world had just emerged from two world wars, it was the beginning of the Black Civil Rights struggle in America and the struggles for the independence of formerly colonized African nations had begun.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was a beacon of hope for many of our own ancestors and older generations because for the first time a worldwide statement against racism and oppression of peoples (especially people of color) in the world by cruel dominators was written and recognized on the world stage. In 1948, gay marriage was not part of the conversation; on the contrary, this was the time of the affirmation of the traditional, nuclear family in America. In fact article 16 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states:

Article 16.

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Notice it says, "Without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion" men and women have a right to marry. This statement says nothing about gay marriage. It affirms marriage between men and women without regard to race, nationality or religion who are of full age.

Furthermore, the document that Bishop Blake is a signatory to is the “Faith in Human Rights” document. Neither does the “Faith in Human Rights” document refer to or affirm gay marriage. Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27) Jesus even said to “love your enemy”, “to bless them and do good to them” (Matthew 5:44). The love we must have for people causes us to affirm their dignity as humans created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26 -27). Affirming the image of God in each person does not mean we affirm the sinful activities of people. The “Faith in Human Rights” document affirms the dignity of all people, who have been created in the image of God. The “Faith in Human Rights” statement reads, “we recognize our responsibility towards our believers and to the world at large and reaffirm our intention to take all necessary steps both within our communities and in co-operation with others to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms for each and every person, irrespective of religion or belief.”

It is right for Christians to support human rights. Christian leaders can, without compromise to our own faith, join with other religious leaders to say that inhumanity should not be perpetrated on human beings. This is what the signatories did with this document. We can agreeably and respectfully, disagree with our fellow human beings, yet affirm their freedom to believe and think as they do. Jesus is Lord and His Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who will believe and receive His truth spoken by our words (Romans 1:16). Dr. David Hall represented Bishop Blake as one who brought the presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit inside him, to the gathering at The Hague. He was a fragrance of Jesus Christ in his conversations with the other religious leaders as seen in the pictures. Perhaps few of the other religious leaders had ever interfaced with a Holy Spirit and love filled Christian.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to persuade and stand on its own in any setting and with every religion. Holy Spirit filled Christians should be in the dialogue on the world stage affirming that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, loved all people, even the world of people, yet judged all human sin on the cross. Otherwise, only those who do not know Jesus Christ will establish what should or should not be valued. The “Faith in Human Rights” document says that as religious people of the world, based on our own religious beliefs (in our case, the Holy Bible), we uphold human rights. Injustice, inhumane treatment and violent oppression are not what God our Father, in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit desires perpetrated on any one.

The Reverend Eugene Rivers
Senior Advisor to the Presiding Bishop

My response to gcmwatch.com blog d3

The Church of God in Christ believes in God, the Father Almighty, the Author and Creator of all things. The Gospels show the relationship of God to Jesus as Father, and represent Him as the Father in the Godhead (St. John 15:8, 14:20). Jesus also gives God the distinction of "Fatherhood" to all believers (St. Matthew 6:8, John 1:12).

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second person in the Godhead of the Trinity or Triune Godhead. We believe that Jesus was and is eternal in his person and nature as the Son of God who was with God in the beginning of creation (John 1:1). We believe that Jesus Christ was crucified, died, and was buried, and that he rose again from the dead (Luke 24:6). In so doing He paid the price of our sins and redeemed all who put their faith in Him. (John 3:16) We believe that Jesus Christ is standing now as mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5)

We believe the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son, is of the same substance, equal to power and glory, and is together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, obeyed, and worshipped. The Holy Ghost is a gift bestowed upon the believer for the purpose of equipping and empowering the believer, making him a more effective witness for service in the world. He teaches and guides one into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8, 8:39).

We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is an experience subsequent to conversion and sanctification and that tongue-speaking is the consequence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the manifestations of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 10:46, 19:1-6).

The Church of God in Christ does not endorse, support or in any way affirm any religion, any spiritual beliefs or positions that are not in accordance with biblical Christianity. In signing the Faith in Human Rights declaration we in no way enter a religious union with any religion or spiritual teaching which is contrary to biblical standards. We nevertheless believe that in the proper context interfaith dialogue that can promote justice and freedom for the oppressed and poor is important for us as Christians who are called to live in the world, even as we are not of the world. (Matt 25:31-46).

Marriage and Family

Since prehistory marriage for the overwhelming majority of human beings in nearly all places, times and cultures, has meant bonds between men and women. In most societies this bond was meant to be permanent and inviolable by others outside the relationship. In many societies the marriage relationship was exclusive between one man and one woman.

As Christians the Church of God in Christ affirms Jesus' definition of marriage as one man and one woman becoming one flesh, in a permanent, exclusive, inviolable relationship of mutual aid, and *agape* love towards each other. "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.’ Therefore what God has joined together let no man separate” (Matthew 19: 4 &5). We proclaim in accordance with the teaching of Paul that marriage is a type of the relationship between Christ and the Church, and as such is a model of faithfulness, self-sacrificing love and submission. “Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her... This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church. However each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5: 25, 32-33).

This inviolable bond between one man and one woman is the basis for the family.

Homosexuality

The Church of God in Christ utterly rejects and uncompromisingly denounces the practice of homosexuality. Homosexual relationships are a violation of the biblical teaching on marriage and are strongly condemned in the scriptures. “Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (Romans 1: 26-27). The Old Testament teaches the same: “Do not lie with another man as one lies with a woman: that is detestable” (Leviticus 18:22). (See also 1 Co 6:9-10, 1 Kings 14:22-24.)At the same time, as Christians we are called to treat all sinners with compassion and to lovingly proclaim the message of salvation and restoration to all, recognizing that we are all sinners in need of the atoning gift of Christ’s death and resurrection. Therefore for the Christian homosexual marriage is not a human right, nor a morally and legally sanctioned entitlement. Sexual preferences do not constitute rights.

The Church of God in Christ supports human rights: all humans, as God’s creation, are entitled to adequate education and healthcare, a living wage, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, democracy, life, liberty, freedom from slavery, security, right to own property, the right to vote....

But gay marriage is not a human right; it is a preference. Sexual orientation is specifically not mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding marriage and family.

Article 16.

- (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- (3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

As Christians, we believe that the family, based on the biblical definition of an agape union between one man and one woman, is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and should be protected. As a Christian, we do not support gay marriage.

And nothing in the Universal Declaration or in the Faith in Human Rights Statement supports gay marriage. By endorsing the statement we affirmed what the Civil Rights Movement affirmed, what America affirms, and what the gospel of Jesus Christ affirms: life and liberty, healthcare and education, a living wage and freedom of speech.

Dr. Paul Alexander, Ph. D.
Professor, Theology and Ethics
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
The Haggard Graduate School of Theology
Azusa-Pacific University

Gay marriage is not a human right.

I support human rights – education, healthcare, a living wage, freedom of assembly, democracy, life, liberty, freedom from slavery, security, right to own property, the right to vote....

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And **NOTHING IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OR IN THE FAITH IN HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENT SUPPORTS GAY MARRIAGE.** By endorsing the statement we affirmed what the Civil Rights Movement affirmed, what America affirms, and what the gospel of Jesus Christ affirms: life and liberty, healthcare and education, a living wage and freedom of speech.

Bishop Blake,

I'll write more, but this is a start that addresses the accusation right up front.

I THINK YOU CAN ALSO USE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED TO FOCUS ON POVERTY, ORPHAN CARE, AND DEVELOPMENT SINCE THAT'S THE INTENTION OF THE DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS – TO EMPHASIZE THE DIGNITY OF HUMANITY AND ALLEVIATE POVERTY AND OPPRESSION.

This might have a very positive result for you, the gospel, and for COGIC, as we turn the tide and emphasize the gospel power and holiness of endorsing such a statement.

In Christ,

Paul

Let us use this as an opportunity to explore the power of the gospel and the importance of human dignity and health. These human rights are affirmed in the Bible and supported by holiness Pentecostals in our daily lives.

Article 25.

- (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Paul