

FREE COMMUNITY CHURCH (FCC)'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN SINGAPORE (NCCS)'S FEEDBACK ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PENAL CODE

The Free Community Church expresses shock and dismay over the National Council of Churches in Singapore's feedback to the Ministry of Home Affairs, published in the March 2007 issue of *The Methodist Message*, commending the retention of S377A of the Penal Code, and further calling for a similar criminalisation of lesbians.

In particular we strongly object to the NCCS feedback in the following respects:

1. It is outrageous that an organisation, purportedly representing members of the Christian faith, is calling for the criminalisation of an entire group of people – the lesbian and gay community. The reality is that the gay and lesbian communities contribute significantly to the well-being and development of Singapore and we should allow them to live their lives in peace.
2. While as Christians we can preach our moral values, we should not seek to impose our point of view by advocating our view be made law that governs a secular state that includes non-Christians in a pluralistic society. This is tantamount to trying to impose Christian values onto non-Christians, not to mention that there is, in reality, no consensus regarding homosexuality even among Christians ourselves.
3. By its statement the NCCS undermines the very love commandments of Jesus who, at every point of his life, fought against the marginalisation, condemnation and oppression of minorities. Why is it that similar pronouncements have not been made of divorce or adultery, against which Jesus had much more to say?
4. The NCCS view not only undermines the Singapore Constitution Article 12(1), which states "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law", it also undermines the Christian belief that all human beings are equally persons of self-worth created by God in God's image.
5. The reality is that societally and globally, homosexuality is no longer viewed as unnatural by most legislatures except those that (i) have carried over the Christian ethos of the British Empire or (ii) are theocracies. Almost every secular legislature in the world no longer criminalizes homosexual acts between consenting adults. Today, homosexuality has been accepted by sociologists as a sub-culture.

In its 8 Nov 2006 press release, the Ministry of Home Affairs revealed that the approach to amending the Penal Code is, amongst others, "to update its provisions so that they remain relevant and effective in view of societal and global changes". With this aim, the government has made the initial step in proposing to repeal S377, abolishing the crime of anal and oral sex when

carried out by heterosexuals in private. NCCS' call to further criminalise lesbians (never before included in this section of the penal code) is a retrograde step and a regressive move backwards.

To deny this, the Church neglects to take seriously its task of doing theology, being critical, constructive and contextual, re-thinking God anew in the ever-changing contexts of every generation that leads to justice for all God's people.

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