

# DOCTRINE COMMISSION

## Membership

The Most Reverend Dr PF Jensen, MA, ThL, BD, DPhil (Chair)  
The Reverend Dr P Adam ThL, BD, MTh, PhD  
The Reverend Dr S Cowdell BSc, BTh, BA (Hons), PhD  
The Right Reverend Dr GN Davies, BSc, MDiv (Hons), ThM (Hons), DipA, PhD.  
The Reverend Dr JDS Dunnill, BA (Hons), DipTh, CertEd, PhD  
The Reverend Dr D Edwards BD (Hons), GradCertEd, PhD  
Dr Lorna Hallahan BSocWk, PhD  
Dr Muriel Porter OAM, BA, LittB, MA (Theol), PhD  
The Reverend Dr Andrew McGowan, BA (Hons), BD (Hons), MA, PhD  
Dr Heather Thomson BSW, BTh, MTh, PhD

The Reverend M Stead, BCom, BD(Hons), DipMin is secretary to the Commission

The Revd Dr Andrew McGowan was appointed to the Commission in 2005. Following the retirement of the Most Reverend Dr P F Carnley AO in May 2005, the Most Reverend Dr PF Jensen was appointed as chairman. Following the resignation of the Revd Dr Graeme Garrett from the Commission in November 2005, the Primate, on the advice of the General Synod Standing Committee, appointed the Revd Dr Peter Adam and Dr Heather Thomson to the Commission in December 2006. (Dr Adam had served as a consultant to the Commission since 2003).

## Meetings

The Doctrine Commission met in Melbourne in May 2005, February 2006 and February 2007.

## About the Reports of the Doctrine Commission

Where a report is given in the name of the Doctrine Commission, it represents the opinion of the Commission as a whole. Where a report is listed under the name(s) of its author(s) writing 'on behalf of the Doctrine Commission', it represents the opinion of its author(s) which has been endorsed by the Commission and commended for consideration by the wider Church, though not all members of the Commission may necessarily agree with everything in the report. Where a report (or essay) is listed under the name of its author alone, it represents the opinions of its author, writing as a member of the Doctrine Commission.

## Agenda

In 2005, the Bishops' Conference requested that the Doctrine Commission examine mission ecclesiology, in dialogue with the particular issues raised by the Cray Report (*Mission Shaped Church*). During 2005 and 2006, the Doctrine Commission devoted significant time to the preparation of a series of essays in response to the theological issues raised by this book, on the following topics:

- Introducing *Mission Shaped Church* - Michael Stead
- A Theology of Church – Glenn Davies
- Incarnational Theology for a Missionary Church – Peter Adam
- Church and Community: The Church at Mission Transforming Society - Don Edwards
- The Mission-Shaped Church and the Foundation of Christian Disciples - John Dunnill
- Worship and the 'Mission-Shaped' Church - Andrew McGowan
- Holy Spirit and Mission: Captivity and Charism in *Mission Shaped Church* - Scott Cowdell

These essays were published in a dedicated edition of the *St Mark's Review* in June 2006, a copy of which is provided to members of General Synod.

In 2005, the Doctrine Commission was asked by Standing Committee (SC2005/1/091) to study the Rochester Report (*'Women Bishops in the Church of England?'*) and report back on its major themes and possible relevance to the Australian situation. Scott Cowdell prepared a report on behalf of the Commission which highlighted key themes, and concluded that, while the report was very useful as a resource which presented both sides of the debate, there was limited applicability to the Australian situation because of differences between English and Australian church polity, and that in practical terms, the report did not go beyond ground already covered in the 2004 Draft Issues Paper of the Working Group on Women in the Episcopate.

In 2005, the Doctrine Commission was asked to discuss the theological issues arising in connection with the Agreed Statement on Christology of the International Anglican Orthodox Commission (IAOOC). Andrew McGowan produced a report on behalf of the Doctrine Commission, which, inter alia, encouraged the IAOOC to consider elucidation of the Agreed Statement, particularly of clause 2, so as to resolve possible ambiguities regarding the use of the word "nature".

In 2005, the Doctrine Commission was asked by the Standing Committee to advise in relation to a proposed bill in relation to the admission of children to Holy Communion. In June 2005, Glenn Davies prepared a response on behalf of the Commission, which was circularised to the proponents of the bill.

For the past three years, the Doctrine Commission has been examining the theological issues surrounding sexual and other forms of abuse, in response to various references from General Synod, Standing Committee and the Professional Standards Commission. We recognise that we still have considerable work to do before offering a full-scale report, and have planned further research on the subject under such themes as power and authority, the culture of the church, truth and reconciliation, the nature of sex, and the nature of sin. However, because of the importance of the subject, the Doctrine Commission has produced a brief interim Report on this subject, which we have recommended for distribution to this General Synod.

The Doctrine Commission has considered a report prepared by Glenn Davies, which argued for an amendment to the *Solemnization of Matrimony Canon 1981*. The report argues that the requirement in the Canon that at least one of the parties to be married must be baptised, ought to be removed. The Doctrine Commission supports the proposed amendment, and has asked the Standing Committee to promote a Bill to General Synod to this effect.

In June 2006, Archbishop Jensen and Dr Scott Cowdell jointly prepared a response to "Four Questions" issued for discussion by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC).

In 2006, the Doctrine Commission began examining the matter of the Reservation of the Sacrament and Extended Communion, as referred by Standing Committee (SC2005/2/008). Peter Adam and Andrew McGowan prepared a comprehensive paper, which was discussed by the Commission at its meeting in February 2007. Arising from this discussion, Drs Adam and McGowan have prepared a subsequent paper for the consideration of Standing Committee.

In 2007, the Doctrine Commission examined the issue of cohabitation between a man and a woman, at the request of Standing Committee (SC 2006/1/031), and provided its report to Standing Committee.

**Archbishop P F Jensen**  
**Chair of the Doctrine Commission**

**PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION  
CONCERNING  
THEOLOGICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING SEXUAL  
AND OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE**

**1. Preface**

- 1.1 At the behest of the General Synod Professional Standards Commission, both the General Synod (Resolution 35/04 (f)) and its Standing Committee (10.3.15) asked the Doctrine Commission for a report on theological issues concerning abuse of the vulnerable. The Professional Standards Commission has subsequently clarified the thinking behind this request. In summary, the Professional Standards Commission has asked the Doctrine Commission to examine:

*the theological issues underlying sexual abuse and harassment in the Church...(and) the Church's responsibility for the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people within its own community including children and other vulnerable people, the abused and known abusers of children or other vulnerable people.*

In its comments on this reference, the Professional Standards Commission notes that a vulnerability to abuse exists in relationships "where there is an improper use of power and/or crossing of appropriate boundaries by an abuser". It identifies as particularly vulnerable, people who are elderly, those who live with poverty, disability, mental illness and grief.

- 1.2 The Doctrine Commission first received this reference in 2005, but still has considerable work to do before offering a full-scale report. The delay reflects both the number of other references to the Commission and the inherent importance and complexity of this subject.
- 1.3 The Doctrine Commission is convinced of the need for profound theological reflection and plans to study the subject under such themes as power and authority, the culture of the church, truth and reconciliation, the nature of sex, and the nature of sin. This work lies ahead of us.
- 1.4 Given the importance of the subject, however, the Doctrine Commission is also offering to the General Synod this brief interim Report. The Report seeks mainly to indicate the areas which need theological reflection, to encourage all (but especially bishops and theological educators) to continue to think through these issues, and to offer some preliminary suggestions about the way in which theological truth can help meet pastoral needs.
- 1.5 Much in the way in which the Church has responded to the scandal of abuse has been both commendable and necessary. However, theological issues are yet to be fully addressed. It is for this reason that the Doctrine Commission is committed to offering its best efforts to the Australian Church, and would be grateful for the prayers of God's people towards such a result.

**2. Why theological reflection on abuse is important**

- 2.1 Theological reflection is required to explicate why sexual and other abuse is so significant for the church, drawing on gospel understandings of the human person in community.
- 2.2 Every human being is a created, embodied, social self. As created, we are frail but individually precious to God. As embodied, we experience the world physically. As

social, we learn who we are as part of the network of family, kin, tribe and humanity. In this, and in the promised new heavens and new earth, we are created to share righteousness and love with God and with each other.

- 2.3 As embodied and social selves, living in the world after the Fall, we are vulnerable to suffering both through our bodies and through our relationships. Violence against the body, such as torture, assault and sexual abuse, creates profound and persistent personal dislocation and pain. This is particularly true for sexual abuse and the abuse of children. It is also true for social abuse such as vilification, rejection, neglect and exploitation.
- 2.4 In all physical abuse, the self is violated through the body. So significant is our sexual nature, however, that the damage to body, mind and soul is intense. The fabric of our lives, physical and relational, is torn. The trust which is indispensable to all human relationships is stolen by the perpetrator.
- 2.5 God's righteous compassion is over all of us, but especially those who are young, elderly and for other reasons weak or powerless. It is particularly offensive to God when they are violated by people with an obligation to treat them with respect and love. The Bible tells us that we shall continue to live in a world in which evil things happen. Indeed, all of us contribute to this state of affairs. Nevertheless there is also forgiveness, transformation and love in this world and the hope of God's new and perfect order in the world to come.
- 2.6 Sexual abuse may happen in private, but its ramifications are wide ranging in the lives of those who are abused, their families and communities. When it occurs (often secretly) among believers, it corrodes fellowship. When disclosed it must be dealt with, as it makes a mockery of the communion of God's people and dishonours Christ's name.

### **3. The problems abuse creates for survivors**

- 3.1 Theological reflection needs to address these issues, among others, for the sake of the survivors of abuse and those who support them. These are matters which call for the most sensitive pastoral care grounded in the wisest theology and informed understandings of the dynamics and effects of abuse.
- 3.2 Problems for faith. If sexual abuse is linked to faith, it poses an immense challenge to the faith of the victim of abuse. She or he may have prayed to God for safety and protection, and no help has come. The abuser has destroyed their confidence in God. The ensuing anger and/or immense spiritual loneliness are not resolved by ignoring them, or by exhortations to have faith, or other cheap panaceas. But powerful resources exist in patient and attentive listening, and prayerful Christian fellowship, informed by an understanding of sin and evil, and sustained by the hope of the gospel of the crucified one.
- 3.3 Problems for the self. The violation of the body is often followed by enduring despair, shame, and self-accusation, contributing to a loss of the sense of the valued self. Such difficulties will not be ameliorated merely by pastoral exhortation and advice. Once again, however, there can be powerful healing in knowing that we are created in God's image. Furthermore, the experience of God's grace in redemption, can (with patience) help bring a measure of trust and restoration of the valued self. Full healing waits for God's future.
- 3.4 The problem of the perpetrator. Such is the impact of sexual abuse, that forgiveness may seem risky, dangerous or an impossible demand. Knowing that Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to forgive those who offend us, many people who have been abused despair of their spiritual state. The situation is often made worse by

exhortations to forgive, or even demands to forgive and be reconciled if the perpetrator has apologised. Forgiveness, which arises from the gospel, offers a wonderful freedom from the impact of violence and abuse, but pastoral teaching about forgiveness must be understood and offered sensitively, with great wisdom.

- 3.5 The problem of forgiveness. Concerning Christ's forgiveness, we need to note that there is a distinction to be made between the decision to forgive and the lifelong practice of forgiveness. Furthermore, the need for forgiveness should not be equated with the full restoration of previous relationships, let alone constitute an invitation to further violence. Reconciliation does not necessarily mean ongoing relationship in the same sense as before. The effects of some abuse cannot be undone or swept away, and the consequences for both parties may be long-lasting.
- 3.6 The problem of the church. Sometimes theological and ecclesiological errors distort the biblical teaching about God and contribute to a climate of abuse. The problems can become systemic and entrenched, with the suppression of truth and misapplied disciplinary processes. Where sexual abuse occurs in the context of the church, especially where the abuser is a person of power within the church, the whole church is accountable. The abuse must not be ignored or covered up. The hurt must be met by truth and repentance and an acceptance of appropriate responsibility and action.

#### **4. The Power of the Gospel**

It is a matter of deep shame that sexual abuse has occurred in our churches and has often been met with culpable naiveté. Turning once again to God's work in Christ and by the power of the Spirit, we move forward in hope.

- 4.1 We confess that our churches are far from perfect. And yet as we heed God's word and reflect the gospel of Jesus, we can build communities of faith, hope and love, through which God's love is experienced and lives transformed for the better. We are grateful for progress in addressing the issues of sexual and other forms of abuse, helping those who have been abused and challenging perpetrators to repentance and restitution.
- 4.2 We recognise that all Christ's people have a role to play in the discipline and godliness of the church. We are called to accept and care for people who have been abused and remain vulnerable, and to hold leadership and potential abusers of power to account. We need to detect and challenge systemic evil, and insist on standards of integrity and truthfulness as befits the gospel.
- 4.3 However, in maintaining the good spiritual and moral health of our Church, the leaders of God's people have a special responsibility. As well as being people of truth and integrity, they must be prepared to exercise such discipline as will build up and not tear down. Through the pastoral teaching of God's word, they will lead people to spiritual maturity, calling for genuine repentance and renewal. In particular they will be aware of those who listen to public teaching and the need to speak to the real situation of significant numbers of people who may be victims of abuse in other contexts and who need to receive the special consolations of the gospel.
- 4.4 A measure of our understanding of the gospel will be our willingness to care for the victims of abuse, and for the perpetrators of abuse. Those who offend may themselves be victims of abuse. The gospel offers the possibility of breaking this cycle. For offenders, too, are made in God's image; they too need the word of the cross and the forgiveness of sins; they too can experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But we will not minister satisfactorily to them by offering 'cheap grace' – the mercy of God without a transformational repentance which accepts the consequences of discipline.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The gospel tells us, while this world lasts, sin and evil are ever present, full healing may not come, and the church will continue to face failure, hypocrisy and abuse. We also know that in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the church created by the gospel, we have a unique capacity for dealing with abuse and its aftermath. Our hope is for the coming of God's kingdom – 'the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells'. This active hope sustains us.
- 5.2 These preliminary reflections are meant to communicate with urgency the ramifications of the problems of sexual and other forms of abuse. Our Church will not have addressed these matters in any way satisfactorily until the theological issues are considered in depth and incorporated into our thinking and pastoral practice.

Doctrine Commission

Feb 2007

## **REPORT FROM THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION CONCERNING EUCCHARISTIC MINISTRY AND MINISTRY IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**

*This is a paper prepared by Andrew McGowan and Peter Adam, for and on behalf of the Doctrine Commission, in response to the issues referred by Standing Committee (SC 2005/2/008) and General Synod (Resolution 75/04). An earlier version of this paper has been discussed at length by the members of the Doctrine Commission, who commend this paper for conversation and reflection, though not all members would agree with all parts of the document.*

### **Introduction**

1. A number of questions about Eucharistic ministry, and specifically the reservation of the sacrament and extended communion, were raised by the General Synod in 2004 in the aftermath of a debate about lay presidency. In subsequent conversation at the request of the Standing Committee, the Doctrine Commission gave particular attention to situations where stipendiary priestly ministry may not be available, and hence focussed its discussion in these more specific terms, among the wider “theological, ecclesial, doctrinal and missional implications”. The issues in this paper have been discussed by the Commission and are commended for consideration by the members of General Synod; its contents should not be taken to have the support of all members of the Commission.
2. Various options may be considered by bishops and communities addressing the need for Eucharistic and other ministries, where distance and other factors make local stipendiary ministry difficult. This paper seeks first to reflect on key issues about the nature of the Holy Communion that might inform those who are reflecting on the merits and dangers of particular pastoral solutions to these challenges, and then briefly to address some specific proposals and practices.
3. Not all Anglicans will reflect theologically the same way on what is appropriate practice concerning the Holy Communion, but there are common sources to which any proposal or practice needs to be accountable. The New Testament writings give certain basic prescriptions about Eucharistic theology and practice, and certain other indications about norms.
4. Australian Anglican reflection must also take account of Constitutional commitments to the sacrament of Holy Communion, as well as to Baptism and to the three-fold order of ministry (Fundamental Declarations), and of the “doctrine and principles of the Church of England embodied in the Book of Common Prayer...and in the Articles of Religion” (Ruling Principles).
5. Faithfulness to scripture regarding the Holy Communion is understood by Anglicans to mean its being “ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him” (Lambeth 1888). The New Testament is not prescriptive on who may preside, but there are other characteristics of the Holy Communion which may be inferred from texts such as 1 Cor 10-11.
6. The NT gives particular emphasis to the integrity of the meal and the reception of the elements within the meal. The danger of inappropriate practice is not primarily that the meal elements lose their character, which does not depend on its participants (1 Cor 11:27), but that the meal will cease to fulfil its proper purpose (11:20) and that it will therefore become destructive.

7. Dom Gregory Dix has pointed to the significance of the four -fold action of the Holy Communion, taking, breaking, blessing, and sharing. In this the focus is not just on the elements, but also on the actions, and on the words that accompany them. To separate the offering of the Eucharist from the receiving of the elements may be seen to undermine the significance of the Eucharistic action.
8. The character of the elements as body and blood of Christ is strongly analogous to the (eschatological) character of the community that shares the meal. In the words of E. L. Mascall, 'in the Eucharist the Whole Christ offers the Whole Christ.' The Christian community, locally and otherwise, is challenged to accept its own distinct identity that stems from sharing the meal. Modern liturgies have emphasized the epiclesis, the prayer for the Holy Spirit. Gerard Austin points out that this is also a prayer for the work of the Spirit in the congregation: 'eucharistic reality is about a conversion: not only of the elements of bread and wine but of the gathered assembly of the baptized.'
9. The Articles of Religion state that "the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped" (28). Insofar as such forms of Eucharistic devotion were perceived as substitutes for actual reception, these objections will have limited bearing on the immediate issues addressed here.
10. The 1662 Ordinal indicates that 'from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests and Deacons.' The commitment to these orders in the Fundamental Declarations of the Anglican Church of Australia implies that there are ministries proper to them.

### **Extended Communion**

11. By Extended Communion we refer to instances where the sacrament is taken directly from a particular celebration for public or private reception by other individuals or a group.
12. We have noted that any separation of reception from the celebration involves a risk of undermining the significance of the Holy Communion. The value of any normal practice of Extended Communion should involve consideration not only of the possibility of reception afforded, but wider issues of the integrity of the sacramental action.
13. The immediate taking of the sacrament, duly consecrated in the course of public liturgy, to someone physically unable to be present with the gathered community need not mitigate the fact of the community meal or other aspects of sharing, unless this practice becomes normal rather than exceptional.
14. The mere possibility of Extended Communion need not mean that it is a more appropriate practice for reception by a sick or housebound person than the intimate celebration, with a priest, envisaged in the Communion Office for the Sick.
15. Regularly taking the sacrament to another worshipping community for an act of public worship is more problematic. There may be other options more adequate to the character of the gathered Church community and to the nature of the sacrament.



## **Reservation**

16. By Reservation of the Sacrament we refer to instances where the sacrament is kept aside from a particular celebration, for later public or private reception by other individuals or a group.
17. Reservation involves inherent difficulties because of the separation of reception from the rest of the Eucharistic action. The pastoral value of reserving the sacrament for later reception must be assessed against the impact on such practice on the proper understanding and practice of the symbolic action normally involved in celebration of the Holy Communion.

## **Diaconal Presidency or 'Administration'**

18. Generally the role of deacons in the celebration of the Holy Communion is to assist the priest or bishop and to distribute the consecrated elements. This is the most appropriate form of "administration", and might well include Extended Communion where authorized. Where it is desired that a person in deacon's orders regularly preside at the Holy Communion, it would be preferable that they be appropriately trained and ordained priest.
19. **Lay Presidency or 'Administration'**. Lay presidency has its proponents, and there are arguments in favour of it, either as an exceptional or as an authorized practice. It does not, however, appear to be a "solution" for ongoing ministry within the recognizable limits of Anglican tradition in particular or Catholic order generally. It would require the lay persons concerned to be trained and formed to an adequate standard for wider aspects of ministry as well [See 25 below].

## **Ecumenical collaborative administration**

20. There are numerous reasons to welcome ecumenical collaboration, not least where isolated communities are able or need to transcend denominational limitations. Communion does imply such a degree of recognition of faith and of ministry that the "sharing" undertaken has integrity.
21. Anglicans should welcome those who are baptised believers communicant in their own traditions. They should take part the celebrations of those who recognize and can accept Anglicans similarly. Questions of recognition of ministry cannot be overlooked.

## **Reduced Eucharistic Frequency**

22. Circumstances may affect the frequency with which Anglicans or others can expect to receive Holy Communion. Isolation such as to make weekly communion difficult or impossible should not be used as a basis for introducing practices otherwise deemed unacceptable.

## **Local Priests**

23. All ordained ministry is a provision of Word and sacraments for the Church, and all the ordained are in a sense "local". The regulations and standards whereby the Church orders the ministries of deacon, priest and bishop are and have always been enormously varied, according to the necessity of providing these ministries. Ordination makes explicit the permanent relational expectations of pastoral and ministerial leadership.

24. The creation of 'local priests' should not be undertaken purely as a means to provide sacramental ministry, but as a means to provide the full and varied various dimensions of ordained ministry, specifically preaching and teaching, and pastoral care and oversight, as well as liturgical leadership.
25. If we are to adopt Local Priests, then the Bishop needs to preserve the power to deal with the situation of pastoral breakdown, which may require the Priest to be moved, or the Licence to be withdrawn. This possibility would raise many pastoral problems.
26. 'Local priests' as well as other ministers, lay and ordained, stipendiary and non-stipendiary, should be trained according to the standards expected of all such lay or ordained persons. The education of the laity as a whole is also interdependent with such adequate formation and education for the ordained. The recognition of this need and the provision of resources to address it is at least as urgent as the needs for sacramental ministry already acknowledged.

**Andrew McGowan and Peter Adam**  
**For and on behalf of the Doctrine Commission**

5 April 2007

## **REPORT OF THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COHABITATION OF A MAN AND WOMAN.**

1. At the March 2006 meeting of the General Synod Standing Committee, the following resolution was agreed to:

*That the Standing Committee refers to the Doctrine Commission the preparation of a report dealing with the following questions regarding the cohabitation of a man and woman:*

- (a) *whether, and if so to what extent, it is compatible with the Holy Scriptures; and*
  - (b) *whether, and if so in what circumstances, it is permissible within the Church's teaching on chastity.* (SC2006/1/031)
2. 'Cohabitation', as this report uses the term, is defined as a monogamous, exclusive relationship, stable over a period of years, and with the clear intent of permanence, but lacking the formal public nature signified by a ceremony in which promises are exchanged before witnesses, and the registration by the State.
3. In answer to point (a), in the Christian understanding of marriage, based on biblical teaching, marriage involves at least three characteristics – exclusive commitment, intended permanence and public declaration. Holy matrimony is protected by God's laws forbidding fornication and adultery and those regulating divorce. In marriage, a husband and wife are joined in a lifelong union of loving and self-giving service to one another, which points to the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church. Marriage is seen by the Church as promoting Christian godliness and stable family life, being for the good of society.
4. While cohabitation so defined may well differ significantly from a casual 'living together' relationship, and while at one level it could be treated as genuine marriage, it is incompatible with the ideals of Scripture for marriage. If the partners have not formally (if privately) vowed permanent fidelity, it is less than marriage. If they have made such a commitment, there seems to be every good reason to make that commitment public and so provide a proper encouragement to others to chastity and fidelity.
5. In answer to point (b) above, following the teaching of Scripture, the Church's understanding of sexual ethics involves 'chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage'. Cohabitation conforms to part of this teaching so long as there is exclusive faithfulness in the relationship. But, unless the relationship involves a public commitment to exclusivity and permanence, it cannot unambiguously witness to the standards expected by the Church.
6. In the view of the Doctrine Commission, cohabitation can be compatible with those ideals of Holy Scripture which call for exclusive fidelity and permanence, but may be incompatible with the ideal of Holy Scripture which calls for a public declaration of commitment to exclusivity and permanence. Under such circumstances, the parties may exercise a proper fidelity, although their actions, deliberately kept private rather than public, may raise questions to do with their 'chastity in singleness'. Some form of public declaration, however, would remove any ambiguity that a cohabiting couple were not committed to faithfulness in marriage. The Doctrine Commission commends the Christian solemnization of marriage as the best form of this public commitment.

**Doctrine Commission**

February 2007