

A STATEMENT ON DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE in relation to Ministerial Credentialing within the CRC Churches International

Introduction

The CRC Churches International regards the unscriptural lowering of the standards of marriage and the easy nature of acquiring divorce in our nation with great concern.

The violation of God's clear standards as stated in His Word causes great hurt to individuals, to the family unit, to the social fabric of our society and to the cause of Christ.

We believe in the Biblical pattern of one monogamous, heterosexual marriage where each party is to mutually complement and build up each other and where the husband is to give loving sacrificial leadership and the wife is to give loving submission to this leadership. The marriages of our credentialed ministers and their spouses are to model this pattern to their congregations and society.

Where a person applying to become a credentialed minister has been previously married and then divorced and perhaps remarried it is essential that beliefs, values and lifestyle have been established to clearly affirm and demonstrate our Biblical convictions regarding marriage.

However we recognise there is Biblical validity to divorce and remarriage in certain circumstances eg. adultery, sexual deviancy, abandonment, domestic violence, addictions like alcohol, substance abuse and gambling etc. Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:1-12 (that God allows divorce in certain circumstances because of hardness of heart) and Paul's guidelines in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16 apply.

In the light of the principles outlined in this paper, our credentialed ministers are also requested to take great care in the process of remarrying Christians who have been previously divorced.

This document needs to be read and applied in conjunction with the Restoration and Discipline of Ministry document (refer to CRC Ministry Manual for this document).

1. On people seeking ministry credentialing who were divorced or lived in a defacto relationship prior to becoming Christians.

- 1.1 Special attention must be given by the ministry accrediting authority as to the reasons for their marital breakdown and the level of healing and restoration that has been effected in the candidate. The following questions must be satisfactorily answered:-
- Who was the more responsible party for the failure?
 - What character flaws and behavioural factors were involved with both parties?
 - What steps have been taken to reconcile past conflicts with the previous spouse and children?
 - What changes have taken place in the person's life since their conversion?
 - What are the person's attitudes to the sanctity of marriage?
 - Are the ministry candidates laxidaisical with regard to divorce and could they bring in an element of compromise with the Word of God?
- 1.2 No divorced and remarried person should be considered for ministry credentialing unless they have shown a consistent pattern of stability and faithfulness with regard to their second marriage. This would normally be required for a period of five years.
- 1.3 In normal circumstances a person who has been divorced two or more times will not be considered for a ministry credential. If there are to be any exceptions to this, special consultations must occur with the National Executive before the State Credentialing authority makes any decision.
- 1.4 If a person who has been credentialed as a divorced person remarries they will be required to be under the covering of a Nationally Credentialed minister (of at least 5 years standing in the Movement) for a five year period to ensure the satisfactory establishment of the new marriage. The relevant credentialing authority may determine that this time period of specific covering be extended.

2. Statement regarding Christian people who divorce or have lived in a defacto relationship and desire to enter CRC ministry

- 2.1 Christian people who, because of a consistent pattern of marital infidelity and disloyalty, cause their marriage to dissolve, will not normally be eligible to become ordained credentialed ministers within the CRC Churches International.
- 2.2 Christian people who, because of a consistent pattern of hardness of heart (as witnessed by responsible pastors and spiritual oversight) cause their spouse to divorce them, or they to divorce their spouse, will not normally be eligible for a CRC Ministry Credential.

- 2.3 An aggrieved and faithful Christian man or woman whose spouse divorces them or forces them to initiate divorce proceedings shall be eligible to remarry and enter CRC ministry. The following conditions are to apply in these instances:
- 2.3.1 That the aggrieved and faithful party receive the protective covering of responsible pastors and spiritual oversight throughout the dissolution of their marriage.
 - 2.3.2 That these responsible spiritual counsellors endorse the spiritual soundness of the aggrieved and faithful party and endorse them as responsible Christians who have done everything in their power to save their Christian marriage.
 - 2.3.3 For those who are remarried the Credentialing process should begin after the person has proven a stability and faithfulness in their second marriage normally for at least three years.
 - 2.3.4 That an existing divorced minister who has fulfilled the expectations of Items 2.3, 2.3.1 and 2.3.2; should they choose to remarry, is to come under the covering of a Nationally Credentialed minister (of at least 5 years standing in the Movement) normally for a three year period to ensure the satisfactory establishment of the new marriage.

3. Avoiding conflicts of interest during the credentialing process

- 3.1 A Nominating Minister who is endorsing a previously divorced candidate should recuse themselves if they are also on the State Credentialing committee deciding on the application. This will ensure that there is not a conflict of interest and the process has total objectivity.

FINALLY

Whilst it is accepted that some circumstances are more complex than others, the respective Credentialing committee will deal with each case on its individual merits and that the standard required for Ministry should never be compromised.

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Amended and endorsed by the National Executive in September 1993.

Updated by Pr Bill Vasilakis in May 2017. Endorsed by National Executive October 2017.

End Document