

## **GENERAL SYNOD RESOLUTION**

### **Statement of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) on family**

*Budapest, 10 November 2005*

The Synod of the RCH is delighted to see that in the "Year of the family" many conferences and church get-togethers dealt with the current situation of families and sought ways to help in today's difficult and critical times.

It is natural that the family model changes from generation to generation, and each change has its virtues and its failings, just like today's family model. Only God's Word is everlasting, which teaches us that the family results from God's creation and providence. By His will we must look after and maintain this. We are aware that in today's culture, the individualistic and consumer approach that absolutises the freedom of the individual is not conducive to long-term relationships or having children. We see alarming signs of this in the dramatic fall in the number of marriages, the rise in the number of divorces, the decline in the number of "complete families", the critical deterioration in the demographic situation, the irresponsible practice of abortions and the more people living alone out of self-interest. In our congregations we meet an increasing number of people living with their partners without being married.

Our church is understanding and feels responsibility for the sociological position of young people in which the distance between their biological maturity and having a family has grown. Yet in the spirit of God's Word it is our duty to protect them from irresponsible relationships and encourage them to enter into long-term partnerships in front of God and others. This is an opportunity that is also offered to our older members who live together without being married. We ask our ministers to address this problem with their wisdom and provide pastoral care to ensure that partnerships continue as marriages where the two people involved, in their congregation, ask for the blessing of God on their alliance. Our church does not view marriage as a private affair but as one of the holiest and most personal community affairs, which depicts the relationship of love between Christ and the church.

We believe that a healthy personality is required to have a family. Internal crises most frequently cannot be overcome by either a partnership or a marriage, and in fact, later on they can be the very causes of crisis with partners or in families. This is why it is extremely important for both preaching and religious education to devote attention to cultivating a mature Christian personality, commitment and responsibility. Our congregations and education institutions should be communities where children are respected as the image of God, not in our possession but entrusted to us. The congregation itself should be a welcoming family where people of different ages and marital statuses can experience the love and care of the Father's house. However, family and blood ties should never rise above spiritual and fraternal relationships in the church.

In its own way our church is still willing to provide any and all help to prepare those whom God has entrusted with leading the lives of others. We would like to prepare ministers, teachers, youth workers, family carers, elders and specialists for this service in a professional

manner. This is why we support the elaboration of programmes and consultation frameworks in the given areas, also working together with other Christian denominations.

At the same time we see God's providence in all efforts that are not directly related to church activities too, which are aimed at maintaining God's creation, the family. We are willing to work together with such organisations and their representatives too.

While most issues surrounding family life are a case of personal responsibility, there are some dimensions where the church has a prophetic duty to call on those who exercise power and have responsibility for legislation. As a Christian church we can only support governments whose legislative endeavours and social policy measures help people to have children and promote a high level of education and upbringing. This is because the latter has been entrusted to the responsibility of parents, according to our reformed church beliefs. We must reject all manifestations which fuel an anti-family and anti-children sentiment in public life and the media, since this runs counter to God, humanity and our future, and is thus evil, and so we must "fight with a free and good conscience" (Heidelberg Catechism 32).

With the realism of the Holy Scripture we can say that sin has corrupted our entire lives, including marriage and the family, and therefore "because our hearts are hard" we cannot save all marriages. Still, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we proclaim that God still views marriage and the family to be the source of joy and a happy life, in which we can grow in integrity and in our Christian life by means of mutual assistance and a willingness to make sacrifices. The greatest blessing is if the family can also be a congregation where the members can say together: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).  
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*Budapest, 10 November 2005*

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