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**FOR INTERNAL CIRCULATION ONLY**

**A Pastoral Letter to our Church of Singapore Family Regarding the Repeal of Section 377A**

Dear COS Family,

Greetings in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ!

At the National Day rally speech on 21 August, our Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (PM) announced the Government's intention to repeal s377A of the Penal Code to decriminalise sex between men. However, the PM assured that the repeal would be done in a controlled, carefully considered way such that safeguards will uphold the institution of marriage between one man and one woman.

This news had undoubtedly caused concern among the Christian community in Singapore as s377A stood as a signpost that reflects the conservative moral values held by the general public. The leadership of COS share these concerns as well, because such a change carries wider implications to the cultural and moral fabric of our nation.

In the past months some of our Elders, together with other church leaders, have been in constant communication with our Government over the debate on s377A. We have attended town halls and closed door meetings with some Cabinet Ministers to voice our concerns and contention to any changes intended for s377A. Our Government has heard our concerns and they will continue to address our concerns through ongoing dialogue sessions.

The intention of this Pastoral Letter is to encourage and assure our congregation that we have been looking into this issue and will continue to work out how we the Body of Christ can stand united as His salt and light to this world.

We are reassured that the Government continues to reflect the values that marriage should be between one man and one woman, and that traditional families should form the building blocks of our society; these align to the Biblical stand regarding marriage. We recognise the Government's stance that s377A's repeal is due to the fact that such a position would be indefensible in Court, and would likely be struck down the next time it is challenged as being in breach of the Equal Protection provision in the Constitution. Thus they chose to proactively repeal s377A in order to handle this issue in a way that maintains our nation's current family values and social norms. This means handling this issue in Parliament rather than in the legal Courts, so that the Government can deal with matters regarding society and policy making, allowing them to protect the values that traditional families form the building blocks of our nation in our Constitution. The Government also acknowledges that they are trying to avoid a social situation where activism becomes polarised, utilising litigation to advance social goals, pushing Singapore to become a deeply divisive society through 'bitter feuds splitting society into warring tribes.' For this we understand that the Government is working towards maintaining a stable and harmonious society for everyone.

At this time, we would like to make our beliefs on this issue known. We are fully aware that there are diverse views within the Christian community and even within our own COS family, and we respect the differing opinions held by our brothers and sisters in Christ. We share our beliefs with humble awareness that this diversity of views is a strength of our COS family that God has used to enable us to share the Gospel in powerful ways. And when it comes to important issues such as this, we would like to unite our COS family around infallible Biblical truths as a core guiding principle that affirms our individual convictions and expressions of God's truth.

Our belief is that the status quo with s377A in place aligns with Biblical values, and for it to be repealed, our concerns lie with the implications in other areas affected by the decriminalisation. In particular are the areas of education in schools regarding sex and marriage, the portrayal of nuclear families and sexual orientation in local media, and public policy-making regarding areas such as marriages and child adoption. These things are concerning because the Biblical values to which we hold fast to in these areas are that God's design and intention for creation is for one man and one woman to be in a permanent union, being intimately bonded together spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Should s377A be repealed, our hope is that this definition of marriage will be written into the Singapore Constitution in order to maintain something close to the status quo. We believe in speaking up for this definition because God's truth and design holds intrinsic good that benefits society, and it is part of His general blessing and providence for all humanity.

The leadership will continue to monitor the ongoing situation and maintain a dialogue with the Government on this issue. We acknowledge that there might be new issues arising in other areas such as an increase in social activism or reverse discrimination, but we are confident that the Government will continue to work closely with the different groups to resolve these issues. This is evident in the assurances from the Government that it has no intention of changing national policies regarding education, adoption rules, advertising standards, and film classifications. We will continue to call for the Government to broaden protections to touch on other areas such as Christian counselling on sex and gender, cancel culture,

religious freedoms in fair employment, and other sensitive issues. We appreciate that the Government is trying to build a more inclusive society with greater harmony for our citizens, and as Christians we believe that we can walk that line without compromising on Biblical truths.

At this time, please continue to pray for the legislative process of writing this into the Constitution, for the Government to have wisdom, and for the continuing peace of our nation. Our hope remains in Christ, that we may become a strong witness for the Gospel in the years ahead.

Despite the strong beliefs expressed here, we want to state clearly that we hold a deep love for all humanity, and it is with this fullness of love and conviction in our hearts that this indeed is God's good desire for all humanity, that we feel the need to share these things. It is one of our core beliefs that all people are created in the image of God and deserving of dignity and love, necessitating us to better understand and empathize with the struggles of others.

We would also like to take this opportunity to speak to those within our COS family who experience same-sex attraction or have questions about their gender. Please, allow us to listen to you, journey with you, stand by you, and be a shoulder that you can trust and rely on. We love you and there is no condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus.

Together with what the leadership is doing, we would also like to encourage our COS family to be faithful alongside us by living out the Word of God in two areas.

1. First, to be rooted in the Word of God by understanding that homosexual acts are not within God's intended plan for creation. As part of the fallen nature of the world, many things have been separated from God, and one of the purposes of the Church is to bring the message of God's love and redemption that all may enjoy the joy of having a personal relationship with God.
2. Second, to live out the two greatest commands highlighted by Jesus, love God and love your neighbour. We understand that there are many, even within our COS family, who experience same- sex attraction. We should not discriminate, but welcome all who seek Jesus, allowing our church to be a place for everyone to experience the love and restorative power of God.

We encourage you to continue to be excellent in prayer and love to one another so that God's glory may dwell richly among our COS family. Pray for our leadership that we might have wisdom as we look to update our church stand on these issues so that we might better serve and minister to those who need it, both in our church and in the world.

The LORD bless you and keep you, and make His face shine upon you and give you peace.

COS Elder Board  
25 August 2022