**A covenant, agreed statements and**

**A PASTORAL LETTER**

of the

Catholic and Anglican Bishops

of Papua New Guinea

This booklet contains a number of statements developed by the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission in Papua New Guinea over a number of years. These statements have been approved by the bishops of both the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. The statement on baptism was developed in dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea and has also been approved by that Church. They are:

*A Covenant between the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea and the Roman Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea* (20 July 2003)

*An Agreed Statement on Baptism between the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea* (19 July 2003)

*A Pastoral Letter on Marriage and Family Life from the Catholic and Anglican Churches in Papua New Guinea* (23 July 2006) and

*An Agreed Statement on Marriage between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea* (2 September 2009).

Study questions are included with the statement on marriage.

It is hoped that Catholic and Anglican people in Papua New Guinea will make use of this booklet to better understand the way our two Churches have drawn close to one another over the years and will pray that we will continue together on a journey of faith toward the full visible unity which Jesus intended for his people.

The Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission in PNG

September 2009

**A Covenant between**

**the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea**

 **and the Roman Catholic Church**

**in Papua New Guinea**

**In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

Believing in the will of God that all Christians are called to be one so that the world will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, recognizing our common baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, encouraged by many years of dialogue, co-operation and friendship between our communities, wishing to respond to the pastoral needs of our people and be an effective evangelistic witness to the nation, we the bishops of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea and the Catholic Bishops Conference in Papua New Guinea, in the name of our clergy and people, enter into this covenant.

**We affirm:**

that the source of true ecclesial unity in Christ is the unity of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

that Jesus Christ, the living centre of our faith, is the Saviour and Lord of the world;

that the desire of Christ is that the Church be one people brought together from all races, languages and cultures;

that the life of grace is nourished by the Word of God we receive through the Scripture, Sacraments and the action of the Holy Spirit within the Church;

that the Holy Spirit, having revealed a rich diversity of gifts in the Anglican and Roman Catholic communions while never ceasing to draw these communions into the fullness of ecclesial unity in Christ, and having enabled us internationally through ARCIC (Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission) to achieve substantial agreement on the Eucharist, Ministry and Authority, now prompts us to overcome the separation which exists in doctrine and ecclesial life, in order to achieve that full visible unity which Christ wills for his Church.

**We resolve:**

to strengthen our unity in Christ and maintain our commitment to eventual full communion by:

pursuing theological dialogue on matters that still separate us: for example, authority and freedom, unity and pluriformity, setting limits and respecting differences, inter-communion and the validity of Anglican Orders, married priests and women’s ordinations;

having standing invitations for the attendance of one episcopal representative of the sister-Church at the yearly meeting of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference and the Anglican Bishops’ Meeting;

holding an annual ARC-PNG (Anglican Roman Catholic-Papua New Guinea) meeting of the Ecumenical Commission of the two Churches; and

making an act of re-dedication to the goal of unity each Pentecost.

to do together whatever does not have to be done separately:

working together on matters of social concern and undertaking joint programmes to strengthen family life and other Christian relationships; and

giving mutual support in educational ministries in seminaries such as through an exchange of staff and students in specific areas of study, mutual visits, encouragement of research papers relating to Anglican/Roman Catholic issues and occasional shared prayer.

to give witness to our growing unity by:

responding to the appropriate openings of closer relationships which emerge naturally between religious orders of the two Churches, such as participation in workshops together (Xavier Institute, the National Formators Workshop), sharing in common outreach programmes (Aitape), cooperation in various ministries (Family Life, Word Publishing, the Melanesian Institute) and an exchange of retreat and workshop directors;

working together to strengthen wider ecumenical activity, particularly through the PNG Council of Churches;

encouraging prayer for a wider unity, especially through the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from Ascension to Pentecost; and

making joint witness to the claims of Christ to the lapsed and to those in particular spiritual need.

In testimony thereof, we affix our signatures this 20th day of July in the year of our Lord 2003 at St. Martin’s Church, East Boroko, Port Moresby.

For the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea

**Archbishop James Ayong**

For the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea

**Bishop John Ribat MSC**

**An Agreed Statement on Baptism**

**between the Anglican Church,**

**the Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**and the Roman Catholic Church**

**in Papua New Guinea**

We confess together that in the sacrament of baptism the Holy Spirit truly incorporates us into Christ and into his Church, justifies and truly renews us, hence we are reborn to a sharing of divine life.

We confess together that baptism is the effective sign of our participation in the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord whereby the baptised receives adoption by the Father and becomes a child of God, receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, obtains the forgiveness of sins, shares in Christ’s eternal priesthood, participates in his messianic mission in the world, and becomes an inheritor of God’s Kingdom.

Therefore together we recognize the necessity of baptism and affirming our common doctrine and practice in respect to this sacrament, do declare:

that we mutually recognize and respect each other’s rite of baptism as contained in the Book of Common Prayer, the Lutheran Book of Worship and the Roman Catholic rite of Baptism;

that the rite of baptism performed by our churches is valid and therefore not to be repeated even conditionally;

that although our churches have always recognized the sacrament of baptism administered according to the New Testament, this present declaration constitutes an act whereby our churches mutually give guarantee of the validity of the baptism administered by their respective ministers;

that our churches accept the baptism of infants where the faith of the parents and of the ecclesial community supplies for the child’s inability to profess a personal faith and represents a commitment to raise the child in the Christian faith;

that baptism administered by our respective ministers are to be duly recorded in the proper registry books, and certificates of baptism delivered to all who are baptized. The presentation of the said certificate of baptism shall be deemed sufficient evidence of the fact and validity of baptism. We agree, in cases of real doubt to consult each other in these matters;

that we commit ourselves to earnest continual prayer, consultation and working together so that we may come to the fullness of our unity in Christ of which baptism is the foundation, the impetus and the pledge.

In testimony thereof, we affix our signatures this 19th day of July in the year of our Lord 2003 at St. Mary’s Cathedral, Port Moresby.

For the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea

**Archbishop James Ayong**

For the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea

**Assistant Bishop Kiage Motoro**

For the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea

**Bishop John Ribat MSC**

**A Pastoral Letter on Marriage and Family Life**

**From the Catholic and Anglican Churches**

**in Papua New Guinea**

*Introduction*

On July 2003 The Catholic and Anglican Churches in PNG signed a Covenant promising to work toward full unity in faith and to “do together whatever does not have to be done separately” including seeking ways to strengthen family life. Never before has it been more important for all of us, as a Church and as a nation, to witness to the goodness of marriage and family. We need to rediscover and develop a deeper appreciation of the ways in which these values were lived in traditional Melanesian society.

*The Law of God*

We want to emphasize that abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity in marriage are humanly good and fulfilling ways to behave. They are not bad things that restrict and limit true freedom. And they are not merely good as means to get something else that is good. Abstinence outside marriage and fidelity in marriage are not merely ways to avoid getting infected with a physical disease such as HIV/AIDS. They are much more than that. They are beautiful and fulfilling ways to live. A man should be faithful to his wife, not just to avoid infection, but because he loves her. Unmarried people should practice abstinence, not just to avoid infection, but out of respect for themselves and others and to protect and enjoy chaste friendships.

*The Witness of Good Marriages and Families*

It is admittedly difficult to convince people of the goodness of sexual discipline with argument. People will never change their behaviour until they are convinced that the alternative is both possible and attractive. In the end they can be shown this only by the witness of young people who respect their own bodies and those of others, and married people who are faithful to each other – and are living productive and happy lives. Married people who have grown old together in love are a powerful witness that their commitment to each other does not enslave them but frees them to enjoy an enriching treasure. Parents and children who love and support one another are a powerful witness to the goodness of a happy family.

*Love: the Foundation of a Good Marriage and Family*

Marriage and family are essential to human society and the fulfillment of persons. Marriage is not just a physical relationship that produces babies. It is not just a friendship that is expressed by sharing sexual pleasure. It is not just an arrangement in which people mutually satisfy each other’s needs. Marriage, as a human institution, is a unique relationship between a man and a woman in which they become one in a deeply loving way that normally leads to having children and raising them in a family.

*Sexual Intercourse as an Expression of Married Love*

Marriage is meant to be a relationship of enduring and exclusive love, a mutual self-giving that is complete. It begins when a man and a woman express in a public way before the community their consent to share life, possessions, cares, time, memory and even death together. There is a personal intensity in this love that overcomes loneliness. It combines a respect for one another as equals with a sense that each one’s gifts complement those of the other. The sexual activity of a married couple is a special expression of the fact that they have become “two in one flesh.” “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one” (*Genesis 2:24;* see *Matthew 19:6*). Sexual activity in marriage is holy. Through it married people are given the ability to cooperate with God in creating new life.

This is true even for a married couple who are not able to have children. Their sexual activity too expresses the fullness of a married love that is special because it is related to life. Childless couples can express the life-giving part of their love in various ways – in generous care for the sick and elderly or in adopting children in need of loving parents. On the other hand, the sexual activity of unmarried people cannot express the fullness of what it means in marriage. It falls short of being the rich experience that only married people can enjoy.

*Good Marriages make Good Families*

Marriage and family are like two sides of a coin that is a celebration of life and love at once. For the friendship of married people has the potential to give birth to new life. This is what distinguishes it from other kinds of friendship and makes it especially attractive. When a married couple becomes parents, the child born of their love is a living sign of the two of them as one. It is as if they become young again in their child who carries characteristics of both of them together.

It is in the give-and-take of daily life together in a family where people first learn to respect the dignity of each individual – in mutual acceptance of each other’s gifts, honest communication, and a generous availability to one another (see *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*). Children need to be loved especially by the parents who brought them to life. Parents need to be ready to make sacrifices to find school fees and to care for their children when they are sick.

*Parents and Children*

Parents and children need to learn to forgive each other and to be responsible in fulfilling their different roles in the family. There is nothing like a good family, at its best, to guard human values and make society more human and personal. This is why it is so important for governments to make and enforce laws that protect marriage and family life from being exploited. There are areas of society that the state cannot influence in the way that only the family can, to effectively foster human values essential for the flourishing of the national community.

*Marriage as a Picture of Christ and the Church*

Finally, all of what has been said takes on special significance within Christian faith and practice. Catholics and Anglicans, as well as members of many other Christian churches, believe that when baptized Christians commit themselves to each other as married people their relationship is a symbol of God’s relationship with us in Christ. “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it” (*Ephesians 5:25*). Catholics and Anglicans believe that when they receive the sacrament of marriage by publicly committing themselves to each other in church they do not merely have their relationship “blessed.” They allow Christ to touch their marriage and give them the strength to be faithful in the face of an uncertain future.

*Conclusion*

We pray that the people of PNG will discover anew the goodness of abstinence outside marriage and fidelity in marriage as well as the goodness of a happy family. We pray that the government can work to protect and promote these human treasures in ways that contribute to the common good of the nation and the personal fulfilment of everyone.

Given at St. Paul’s Parish Church, Mt. Hagen on the 23rd of July 2006, the day of prayer for the unity of Anglicans and Catholics.

**For the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea**

**Archbishop James Ayong**

**For the** Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea

**Bishop Douglas Young SVD**

**Agreed Statement on Marriage**

**between the Anglican Church**

**and the Roman Catholic Church**

**in Papua New Guinea**

**1.00 Preamble:**

**1.01** The Bible teaches us that marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace. It is a holy mystery in which a man and woman become one flesh (*Mk 10:5-9; cf. Gen 2:24*).. It is a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. It is entered into by mutual and free consent. It is God’s purpose that husband and wife give themselves to each other throughout their lives and so be united in love as Christ is united with his Church (*Eph 5:31-32*). Sexual intercourse, as an expression of faithful intimacy, properly belongs within marriage alone.

**1.02** Marriage includes three blessings which are traditionally described as the procreation and nurture of children, the hallowing and right direction of natural instincts and affections, and the mutual love, help and comfort which each partner affords to the other in prosperity and adversity. Through marriage each of the partners grows in maturity. Their marriage is a school of patience and forgiveness.

**1.03** In marriage husband and wife begin a new life together in the community. Their marriage is the central focus of their relationship, around which other relationships grow. Their home life together, with one another and with their children, is their primary contribution to society. It is a way of life that all should honour. It must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly or selfishly; but reverently, responsibly and after serious thought.1

**1.04** “In both our Communions marriage has a God-given pattern and significance, entailing the life-long exclusive commitment of a man and woman, encompassing the reciprocal love of husband and wife and the procreation and raising of children. Both Communions speak of marriage as a covenant and a vocation to holiness and see in it the order of creation as both sign and reality of God’s faithful love.”2

We are able to pray together:

**1.05** Father, in the beginning, by your power you made everything out of nothing. You made humankind in your own likeness. You joined man and woman as husband and wife so that they should no longer be two, but one flesh; and you taught us that what you have united may never be divided.

**1.06** Father, by your plan married life has been established as the one blessing that was not forfeited by original sin or washed away in the flood. To reveal the plan of your love, you made the union of husband and wife an image of the covenant between you and your people. In the fulfilment of this sacrament, the marriage of a Christian man and woman is a sign of the marriage between Christ and the Church.

**1.07** Help husbands and wives to share with each other the gifts of your love and become one in mind and heart as witnesses to your presence in their marriage. May they both praise you when they are happy and turn to you in their sorrows. May they be glad that you help them in their work and know that you are with them in their need. May they pray to you in the community of the Church. Give them the strength which comes from the Gospel so that they may be witnesses of Christ to others. Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children’s children. May they reach old age in the company of their friends and come at last to the kingdom of heaven. Amen.3

**2.00 Things We Confess Together:**

 We make the commitment together to follow the teaching of Christ on marriage.

**2.01**  We confess together that human sexuality embraces the whole range of bodily, imaginative, affective and spiritual experience. It is ordered toward the gift of self and the creation of life (*Eph 5:25*).

**2.02**  We confess together that the goodness of sexual experience, isolated from the vision of the full humanity to which God calls us, is undermined (*Rom 1:18-32*). Thus we recognise the need to integrate sexuality into an ordered pattern of life which will nurture a person's spiritual relationships both with other persons and with God.

**2.03**  We confess together that such integration calls for the exercise of the virtue of chastity, a virtue rooted in the spiritual significance of bodily existence (cf. *1 Thess 4:1-8; Gal 5:23; 1 Cor 6:9, 12-20*). Chastity is not the same as celibacy or abstinence. It means the “successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of someone in his or her bodily and spiritual being.”4 It refers to a responsible attitude toward sexual behaviour for both married and unmarried people. It is a humanly good, beautiful and fulfilling way to behave and to live. We confess together that the new life in Christ calls for a radical break with the sin of sexual self-centeredness which leads inevitably to individual and social disintegration.5

**2.04**  We confess together that marriage is a vocation: a "vocation to holiness"6 involving an "integral vision of... vocation"7. When God calls women and men to the married state and supports them in it, God's love for them is creative, redemptive and sanctifying.8

**2.05**  We confess together that marriage is a gift of God from creation. “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one” (*Genesis 2:24;* see *Matthew 19:6*). Marriage is raised to a new level in Christ. When baptised Christians commit themselves to each other in the sacrament of marriage their relationship is a symbol of God’s relationship with us in Christ. “Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it” (*Ephesians 5, 25*).

**2.06**  We confess that the sexual activity of a married couple is a special expression of the fact that they have become “two in one flesh.” Sexual activity in marriage is holy. Through it married people are given the ability to cooperate with God in creating new life. It is in their openness to the procreation and nurturing of children that a man and a woman together share in the life-giving generosity of God (cf. *Gen 1:27-29*).9

**2.07**  We confess together that the sacred nature of the marriage covenant demands peaceful relations between husband and wife, and between parents and children (1 *Peter 3:7*). As a natural institution marriage already is to be a relationship of mutual trust. This takes on greater significance in the sacrament of marriage. The Christian family is the “domestic Church” and a school of charity where parents and children are challenged daily to be faithful to the gospel. The gentleness of Christ who came to “serve and not be served” (Matthew 20:28) should be their model.

**2.08**  We confess together that the ministers of the marriage are the man and woman themselves who bring the marriage into being by making a free solemn vow and promise of enduring, exclusive love and mutual self-giving that is only possible between one man and one woman. Since marriage points to the love of Christ who bound himself in an irrevocable covenant to the Church, his bride, it is indissoluble (*Mk 10:5-9; Eph 5:31-32*).10 In this light, not only marital infidelity, but also polygamous marriages and same-sex unions are contrary to marriage both as a natural institution and as a Christian sacrament.

**2.09**  We confess together that God calls married couples to "responsible parenthood". This refers to a range of moral concerns which begins with the decision to accept parenthood and goes on to include the nurture, education, support and guidance of children: Children need to be loved especially by the parents who brought them to life. Parents need to be ready to make sacrifices and to care for their children when they are sick. Through example and instruction they should bring their children up in the faith.

**3.00 Things that Need Further Discussion:**

We agree to hold further discussions regarding our understanding of the significance of a sacramental marriage, the morality of contraception, divorce, annulment and remarriage after divorce as well as the baptism of children of polygamous unions or of couples living together without marriage. We agree to clarify further our understanding of the validity of a traditional marriage of the unbaptized.

**4.00 Things We Declare Together:**

 Therefore, together, affirming our common doctrine and practice in respect to this sacrament, we do declare:

**4.01**  that we commit ourselves to give importance to a serious preparation for marriage explaining the meaning of the sacrament, the duties and responsibilities of parents and, if relevant, the positive values and challenges of a mixed marriage. In the case of a mixed marriage, when possible, it could be good for ministers of both Churches to conduct the preparation program together. It should be made clear that the sacrament of marriage between baptized persons is much more than merely a “blessing,” for through this sacrament their vows are changed into an expression of Christ’s love for the Church and strengthened to endure;

**4.02**  that we commit ourselves to actively encourage couples to receive the sacrament of marriage;

**4.03**  that, because of the connection between the sacrament of marriage and oneness in the Body of Christ and because reception of the Eucharist is a sign and a source of both fidelity in marriage and unity in Christ, it is appropriate that those who are in a polygamous marriage or a same-sex union exclude themselves from the Eucharist. People who are separated but have not broken marital fidelity can receive the Eucharist. However those who can not receive the Eucharist are encouraged to continue to come to Church and to join with the community in prayer(*1 Cor 6:12-20, 10:14-22, 11:27-31*);

**4.04**  that we mutually recognise and respect each other’s rite of marriage as contained in the *Anglican Prayer Book of PNG* and the *Catholic Rite of Marriage* as the form required for the validity of marriage within our two Churches, and that, in the case of mixed marriages, as part of the marriage preparation program, couples be encouraged to discuss in which Church and according to which rite the marriage will be celebrated and reach a decision with appropriate permissions and appropriate advice;

**4.05** that since members of our Churches are asked, in cases of mixed marriages, to promise sincerely to do all in his or her power to see that the children of the marriage be baptised in their respective Churches, they be invited and encouraged to discuss the baptism and education of the children they will have, and where possible, come to an agreement on this question before marriage;12

**4.06**  that permission of the bishop of the Catholic partner (*dispensation from canonical form*)13 is to be sought if the marriage will be celebrated in the Anglican Church. Similarly permission of the bishop of the Anglican partner is to be sought if the marriage will be celebrated in the Catholic Church;

**4.07**  that, in communities where bride price is required, normally a Church marriage is permitted only after legitimate customary requirements are agreed upon by both parties. The original intention of bride price as a mutual exchange to express and insure the stability of a marriage, is often lost and leads to an abuse of this tradition.

**4.08**  that with the previous authorisation of their respective bishops a Catholic priest or deacon may participate in a mixed marriage in the Anglican rite. Similarly an Anglican priest or deacon may participate in a mixed marriage in the Catholic rite. In this case there is to be only one ceremony in which the presiding minister receives the marriage vows. At the invitation of the celebrant the priest of the other Church may offer appropriate prayers, read from the Scriptures, give a brief exhortation and bless the couple;14

**4.09**  that marriages witnessed by our respective ministers are to be duly recorded in the proper registry books, and certificates of marriage delivered to all who have received the sacrament of marriage. The presentation of the said certificate of marriage shall be deemed sufficient evidence of the fact and validity of marriage. We agree, in cases of real doubt, to consult each other in these matters;

**4.10**  that although mixed marriage may present difficulties to the couples themselves, pastoral care and help is to be extended to them where the stress is on the positive aspects of what the couples share together as Christians in the life of grace, in faith, hope and love, along with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit;

**4.11**  that any form of domestic violence violates marriage and family life which are meant to be signs of God’s faithful love; that sexual violence against one’s wife is worse than sexual violence against another woman because it violates the “two-in-one flesh” relationship of a married couple; that sexual violence against one’s child is worse than sexual violence against another child because it violates the parental relationship; that the practice of polygamy and the misuse of bride price can be a source of increased domestic violence; and that in a sacramental marriage domestic violence makes a mockery of the role of Christ in the marriage and is a gross distortion of the gospel;

**4.12**  that qualified persons should be trained to provide marriage counselling in a Melanesian context in an effort to salvage troubled marriages and to eliminate domestic violence; and that the use of marriage enrichment programs, such as Couples for Christ, should be encouraged to provide a support for and a means of strengthening good marriages.

**5.00** In testimony thereof, we affix our signatures this 2 day of September in the year of our Lord 2009 at Saint Paul’s Church, Mount Hagen

For the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea

**Archbishop James Ayong**

For the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea

**Bishop John Ribat MSC**

**Endnotes**

1. This introduction is based on material from the *Church of England ASB 1980: The Marriage Service* and *Marriage: A teaching document of the House of Bishops of the Church of England* (1999).

*2. Growing in Unity and Mission – An Agreed Statement of the International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission* (2007) paragraph 85.

3. This prayer is based on the three alternative “nuptial blessings” found in *The Sacramentary*, Ritual Masses: IV, Wedding Mass; 1. For the Celebration of Marriage A, B and C.

4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) no. 2337.

5. Cf. ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*; Joint Pastoral Letter of Anglican and Catholic Bishops on *Marriage and Family Life* (2006).

6. Lambeth 1968, Resolution 22

*7. Familiaris Consortio*, 32.

8. Cf. Lambeth, ibid.

9. Cf. ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* n.58; Joint Pastoral Letter of Anglican and Catholic Bishops on *Marriage and Family Life* (2006).

Cf. Joint Pastoral Letter of Anglican and Catholic Bishops on *Marriage and Family Life* (2006); ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* n.64.

Cf. ARCIC II, *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* n.79; Joint Pastoral Letter of Anglican and Catholic Bishops on *Marriage and Family Life* (2006).

12. Cf. Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: 1993) n.155.

13. Cf. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms for Ecumenism*, n.154.

14. Cf. *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms for Ecumenism*, n.157

**Discussion Questions**

**on the Agreed Statement on Marriage**

**between the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church**

**in Papua New Guinea**

1. What do you understand by the phrase “marriage is a gift of God in creation”? (1.01; see 2.05)

2. Why do you think that marriage can only be between one man and one woman? (see 1.01 and 2.08)

3. Why is a marriage the right context for “the procreation and nurture of children”? (1.02; see 2.06)

4. Within your own marriage or in marriages you know, have you witnessed marriage as “a school of patience and forgiveness”? (1.02)

5. In what ways can a married couple “begin a new life together in the community”? (1.03)

6. Choosing to get married to someone is perhaps the most important decision most people make in their lives. The Agreed Statement says that “it must not be undertaken carelessly, lightly or selfishly; but reverently, responsibly and after serious thought.” How do you think couples can be best prepared for marriage? (1.03)

7. Christian marriage preparation stresses the “mutual and free consent” of the couple, which means that a couple is not forced into marriage. What role should parents and other family members have in a Christian marriage in Melanesia? (1.01)

8. Why does having many wives not express the real meaning of Christian marriage? (see 2.08)

9. How can we help to promote the Christian understanding of marriage and human sexuality, in particular, fidelity in marriage and abstinence outside of marriage, as a positive and fulfilling way of life? (see 2.03)

10. Chastity refers to “a responsible attitude to sexual behaviour for both married and unmarried people”. In a world of many temptations, how can young people be helped to understand that “sexual intercourse properly belongs within marriage alone”? (1.01)

11. In the Agreed Statement the Christian family is described as “the domestic Church”. What practical decisions could parents make to live this idea? (2.07)

12. What do you understand by the phrase “responsible parenthood”? (see 2.09)

13. What are some of the ways in which a mixed marriage between people of different church backgrounds can both challenge and enrich a marriage? (see 4.01 and 4.10)

14. In places where bride price is customary, how can this practice be restored as a positive aspect of marriage in Melanesia? (see 4.07)

15. What other Melanesian customs can enhance the celebration and living of Christian marriage?

16. Papua New Guinea is plagued by a growth in domestic violence and sadly some marriages can be a place of fear and injury. The Agreed Statement takes a strong stand against all forms of violence within a Christian marriage. How can couples be helped to return to mutual respect? (see 4.11 and 4.12)

17. Roman Catholic clergy live a vocation to the consecrated celibate life whilst many Anglican clergy live a vocation to the married life. Do you think it would be good for Roman Catholic and Anglican priests to share with each other their personal experiences of these two special vocations, in order to help in their preparation of couples for Christian marriage? (see 4.01)

In what other ways could our churches help each other in our preparation of young people for marriage and to be parents?