

## MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL

### THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church welcomes this opportunity to give evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee

Within the Methodist Church there is a spectrum of views on human sexuality. Methodist Standing Orders, however, state our belief, "that marriage is a gift of God and that it is God's intention that a marriage should be a life-long union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman." At the same time we have for nearly twenty years explicitly recognised, affirmed and celebrated the participation and ministry of lesbians and gay men, and been committed to a pilgrimage of faith to combat discrimination and give dignity and worth to people whatever their sexuality.

The Methodist Conference, voted in July 2013 to appoint a working group to consider whether the Methodist Church's position on marriage needs revising in light of changes in society. It also agreed that the membership of the working group should take account of the Methodist Church's breadth of theology, age, ethnicity, gender and experience.

A report submitted to the Conference by the Methodist Council had asked for a working group to undertake this consideration with reference to "scripture, tradition, reason and experience". The working group will be tasked with considering the implications of any change in legislation with reference to the Church as a consequence of the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Bill and the Marriages (Same Sex Couples) Bill relating to England and Wales. Recommendations for any changes in the Church's practice or polity will also be made by the working party.

Any recommendations by the Working Party will be brought to the Methodist Conference for ratification, or otherwise.

Reverend Dr David P Easton  
Chair of the Methodist Church in Scotland  
28 August 2013