



**KYRKLIG SAMLING
KRING BIBELN OCH BEKÄNNELSEN**

2009-11-26

Dear Sir,

As you may know, the General Assembly of the Church of Sweden decided recently (October 22, 2009), with 176 votes against 62 (11 abstaining), to conform with the Parliament legislation from May 2009 by admitting same-sex couples to undergo the Christian marriage ritual, and apply for the continued right to have weddings performed by ordained ministers of the Church of Sweden considered as legally valid according to Swedish law.

Although a formal disestablishment and legal separation between State and Church took place in Sweden in the year 2000, it should be noted that a majority of delegates in the General Assembly still represent the political parties of our Parliament, and are bound in their voting to what their party organization (called "nomination groups" in the nation-wide church elections every fourth year) has decided beforehand. This was clearly stated earlier this year, both by cabinet ministers and the leader of the opposition.

The Assembly decision is based on the church's alleged power to "broaden" the concept of marriage from denoting a union of one man and one woman for life, to being a synonym of "twohood", life union between any two people – a "gender-neutral marriage". In fact, this decision moved Christian marriage from being ordained by God to something that can be changed by an ecclesiastical assembly, as evidenced by changing the ritual for weddings, where the reading of Matth. 19:4-5 now is optional. This immediately started a severe split within the Church of Sweden, clearly demonstrated by the fact that seven of the fourteen bishops (who must be present in the Assembly, but have no right to vote in it) have declared that "the decision of the General Assembly about marriage and weddings has been carried through in a manner which lacks general local or ecumenical support; nor has it been satisfactorily founded on the faith, confession and doctrine of our church, and, therefore, imperils the unity of the church".

A substantial number of members of the Church of Sweden, including many of its clergy, and even most of the retired bishops (together with the seven mentioned above) consider the Assembly decision on same-sex marriages as neither true in its content nor reached by a legitimate process. It is not only a canonical nullity but an expression of presumptuousness and arrogance, violating our church's own faith, confession and doctrine, cutting off its roots, and thereby endangering its identity as a Christian Church. This step is an act which in the long run will lead our Swedish church out into total ecumenical isolation.

A feeling of dismay and shock is spreading through our church at this rapid loss of substance. More and more people feel homeless in the church they have belonged to since their baptism

as infants. Both clergy and lay people ask themselves. "How should we act now when on the one side we do have a calling to live in the church where we were baptized, confirmed, perhaps also ordained, with the spiritual responsibility for others that this entails, and on the other side we feel betrayed by the decisions of the (politically elected) leaders of this same church? How does one live and act in a church that is occupied and run by faithless powers?" We are perplexed and at a loss what to do, and we neither can nor want to solve our problems on our own – we need contact with and helpful counsel from our fellow Christians in the worldwide Church.

Therefore, the Board of Kyrklig Samling kring Bibeln och bekännelsen (The Coalition for Bible and Confession in the Church of Sweden) has decided to ask you and other sister-churches for advice and counsel on how to act in the situation created by this deplorable Assembly decision. The said Coalition is an umbrella organization of traditionalist Christians, representing various movements and spiritualities within the Church of Sweden who, notwithstanding their differences, share a deep veneration for Holy Scripture and the classical faith tradition in which it is embedded. It was created in 1958 by a number of concerned clergy and laymen led by the Bishop of Gothenburg, Bo Giertz, in order to unite High Church, Evangelicals, Confessional Lutherans, Charismatics, and others, in the work to turn back the whole of our church to the same "first love" for the Word of God. Bishop Giertz' successor in Gothenburg, Bertil Gärtner, who during the last two decades was the single remaining bishop who held the same traditionalist position passed away in September 2009.

Deeply regretting that the decision makers of the Church of Sweden did not attempt to seek counsel and support from their Christian brothers and sisters in churches and associations outside its own borders, we now turn to you with a plea for your help in understanding our situation and acting in it. Would you be willing to give us considered replies to the following questions. Your answers would help and encourage us:

- Do you, who see our church from the outside, recognize the Church of Christ as described in the New Testament and the Nicene Creed in the Church of Sweden as it now has become?
- What would you advise us to do in order to remain living in our church without accepting and condoning its decay of faith and order?
- Will in the future an ordained minister from us be unconditionally accepted in ministering the Word and the sacraments in your church?

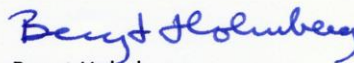
We turn to you as brothers and sisters in Christ, for your advice, your support and your prayers, bearing Saint Paul's word in 1 Cor. 12.23a in mind: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it."

Yours in the communion of Jesus Christ,



Yngve Kalin

Rev., Chairman of Kyrklig Samling



Bengt Hölmberg

Rev. Dr., Vice Chairman of Kyrklig Samling

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