



SUNNYBROOK
community church

THE STATEMENTS

OF SUNNYBROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH AS
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF ELDERS

**SEEKING
GROWING
SENDING**

AMENDED AUGUST 2026

PREFACE

Introduction

The Statements of Sunnybrook Community Church summarize the core of our beliefs and interpretations. These statements combine biblical integrity and guidance to solve issues that may arise in our church. These are adopted or amended from time to time by the Board of Directors.

Biblical Basis for Guidelines and Amendment

These Statements are biblical, with a focus on leading and edifying the local body of believers. They are to be consistent with the Statements of Belief contained in the Articles of Incorporation.

No change may be made that is in conflict with the Statements of Belief contained in the Articles of Incorporation. Prior to making any substantive change to these Statements, the Board of Directors shall provide a member forum, after at least two weeks notice, for discussion on the intended changes and reasons for such change.

About Sunnybrook Community Church

Also known as Sunnybrook, we have always been about Jesus and our (your) journey with Him.

No matter where you are in your journey with Jesus, Sunnybrook is here to help you find Him, build your relationship with Him, and support you wherever He sends you.

VISION, VALUES, BELIEFS, ESSENTIALS

Our Vision: Seeking those who don't know Jesus, growing those who do, sending those who will.

Naturally, because we are a collection of diverse individuals, we all have slightly different approaches with regard to how we go about serving Christ, yet certain common values unify our efforts and define our direction.

At Sunnybrook, our vision is to invite people from all walks of life to join us in getting to know Jesus in a personal way while worshipping God through His Son, Jesus.

We set out to SEEK those who don't know Jesus so that they can experience the love and healing that only Jesus can offer through relevant Scripture-based teaching.

We also work hard to GROW those who do know Jesus so they can dive deeper into their relationship with Him. We offer a wide variety of small groups, support groups, classes, and events. The goal of these groups is to bring people together who are traveling the same path, as well as open venues that welcome questions about Jesus and their journey with Him.

Our programs and support groups are also designed to SEND those who will go out into the community and the world to share Jesus. We support numerous missions throughout the Siouxland area as well as nationally and internationally.

Our Core Values - 10 Values We Believe at Sunnybrook

1. That biblical teaching is the catalyst for transformation in individuals' lives and in the Church. (Romans 12:7; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; James 1:23-25)
2. That lost people matter to God, and therefore ought to matter to the Church. (Luke 5:30-32; Luke 15; Matthew 18:14)
3. That the church should be culturally relevant while remaining biblically pure. (2 Corinthians 9:19-23)
4. That Christ-followers should be authentic and yearn for continuous growth. (Ephesians 4:25-26, 32; Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 1:6)
5. That a church should operate as a unified community of servants with men and women utilizing their spiritual gifts. (2 Corinthians 12 & 14; Romans 12; Ephesians 4; Psalm 133:1)
6. That loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life. (1 Corinthians 13; Nehemiah 3; Luke 10:1; John 13:34-35)
7. That life-change happens best in small groups. (Luke 6:12-13; Acts 2:44-47)
8. That excellence honors God and inspires people. (Colossians 3:17; Malachi 1:6-14; Proverbs 27:17)
9. That churches should be led by men and women with leadership gifts. (Nehemiah 1-2; Romans 12:8; Acts 6:2-5)
10. That the pursuit of full devotion to Christ and His cause is essential for every believer. (1 Kings 11:4; Philippians 2:1-11; 2 Corinthians 8:7)

The Essentials We Believe

1. About God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God. (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

2. About Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (Matthew 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30; Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13)

3. About the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily. (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 14:16-17, 16:7-13, 17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13, 5:8; Galatians 5:25)

4. About the Bible

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 12:6; 119:105,160; Proverbs 30:5)

5. About Human Beings

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called sin. This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life. (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a, 59:1-2; Romans 3:23)

6. About Salvation

Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment we receive Jesus Christ into our life by faith. (Romans 5:1; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26)

7. About Eternal Security

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot lose it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security. (John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5)

8. About Eternity

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. (John 3:16; 14:17; Romans 6:23; 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-9)

These statements address the following topics and issues

(in alphabetical order):

Baptism	9
Communion	13
Discipline	15
Governance	17
Lead Pastor	21
Marriage	25
Marriage, Singleness, and Sexual Practice (A Biblical Analysis)	27
Ordination and Installation of Elders	41
Ordination and Installation of Lead Pastor	43
Prayer	49
Protecting Minors and Vulnerable Adults	53
Reconciliation	55
Stewardship and Giving	57
Women and Men in Community	61
Final Thoughts	63

BAPTISM

Introduction

At Sunnybrook, we recognize and practice believer baptism, infant baptism, and child dedication. The spiritual significance is outlined below.

Believer's Baptism

In believer's baptism, the person being baptized is publicly professing his or her own decision to accept Christ as their Savior. It is considered a step of obedience following one's declaration of faith in Jesus Christ. *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38)

Throughout the gospels and the book of Acts, there are numerous examples of people believing and being baptized. Typically, believer's baptism takes place by immersion which follows the example of Christ's immersion in the Jordan River.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

Scriptural teaching on believer's baptism may be summarized as follows:

- Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ. It is fulfilled by individuals who admit their sin, believe that God sent His Son Jesus to die for their sin, and commit to receive this gift of grace and follow Jesus.
- Baptism symbolizes the spiritual cleansing through divine forgiveness and newness of life experienced by believers as they identify with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church.

Specific Passages Concerning Baptism

At Sunnybrook, the Bible is the source of our beliefs, including our views on baptism. Following is a few key passages that can help us see what purpose baptism plays in the life of a believer.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His followers, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and The Holy Spirit."*

Baptism is the means by which disciples of Christ are identified. Because Christ commanded it, Christ followers willingly submit to baptism.

In passages such as (Acts 2:41, 8:12 and 10:47-48), it is evident the act of baptism came after an individual's decision to trust Christ for salvation. It was an outward sign of something that occurred in the person's life (usually quite recently).

In Romans 6:1-11, the Apostle Paul explains how baptism by immersion identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going under water symbolizes Christ's death while emerging from the water illustrates His resurrection. Although the immersion mode of Baptism best illustrates the work of Christ, this passage does not mandate how much water should be used. The value of the sacrament of baptism is in the life and heart of the believer, not in the amount of water used. Because of this, Sunnybrook affirms both sprinkling and immersion as acceptable methods of baptism.

The Wedding Illustration

One way to grasp the meaning of baptism – as well as what it does not mean – is to imagine a wedding. The bride and groom stand side by side before the church. They take turns promising *"til death do us part."* This bride and groom do not look any different on the outside but in a few moments they will be married – united for life by invisible cords. In order to signify that unseen union, the bride and groom exchange rings. These bands of gold tell the world they are now married. A permanent change has happened to them.

Now imagine an unmarried couple is watching. They decide they want to be married, too. So they give each other rings right where they sit. No public commitments, no vows made, just the symbols of union exchanged. As they walk from the church, their hands, like those of the bride and groom, bear the accepted token of lifetime love. However, Only the couple that has made a public commitment to each other is really married.

The point is obvious. Symbol is not substance. Marriage depends on a public commitment, not on bands of gold. The same is true of becoming a Christian. What may outwardly identify you as a believer does not make you one. The wedding rings do not marry the couple. They are fitting symbols, but without the reality of commitment, a ring – like baptism – is void of meaning. Therefore, you must choose Christ, and you must choose baptism, for the sacrament to have the meaning intended by the Bible.

Of course, you do not have to be baptized to be saved any more than you must exchange rings to be pronounced man and wife. But if the inner commitment to trust Christ alone for salvation has been made, then the outward symbol of baptism should be as valued and as visible as the gold ring on a newlywed's finger.

Infant Baptism

Parents request infant baptism for their child as a sign of the covenant to bring a child up in the way of the Lord in hopes they may one day receive Christ as their Savior. It is not a guarantee of salvation and we do not believe that the Bible teaches baptismal regeneration.

The infant is usually baptized by "*sprinkling*", or the act of dropping water over the baby's forehead, baptizing the infant in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is considered a sacrament or a sacred oath and refers to God's covenant with us first as believers, and a parent's response in regard to God's gracious provision of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Paul correlates baptism with circumcision in Colossians 2:11-12. Circumcision is a sign of the Old Covenant of God's mercy; baptism is a sign of the New Covenant of Grace. The acceptance of this form of baptism harks back to when entire households were baptized by the disciples and apostles when they went out, following the Great Commission to "*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...*" (Matthew 28:19)

Child Dedication

Parents can choose to acknowledge their desire to bring their child up in the way of the Lord through child dedication. During the dedication celebration, parents present the child in front of others and water is not used.

The scriptural root of dedication is found in (1 Samuel 1:27–28), where a godly woman named Hannah prayed year after year for God to give her a child. He answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words: "*For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord.*" A New Testament example is in Luke 2. Following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took the child Jesus to the temple and dedicated him. In both Scripture passages, the parents entrusted their child completely to God.

COMMUNION

Introduction

What is communion?

Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, is Christ's gift to the church. *The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."* (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

Following Jesus' example and instruction, when the church celebrates the Lord's Supper we receive gifts of bread and wine, we give thanks to God, we break the bread and pour the wine, and we share the food and drink with each other. In these simple actions believers experience a profound mystery: Christ himself is present and his life passes into us and is made ours. As baptism is the sign and seal of our engrafting into Christ, the Lord's Supper is a means by which Christ continually nourishes, strengthens, and comforts us.

What happens during communion?

Through our prayers and the sharing of bread and wine, we are joined to Christ, and through Christ, to each other. At the communion table, we remember what God has done for us. The past event of our Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension comes in the present so that its power once again touches us, changes us, and heals us. We gather at the table with joy. Our eating and drinking is a celebration of our risen Lord. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us. We can give joyful thanks for what God has done, and is doing, in our lives and in the world. We come to the table in hope. We look forward with joyful anticipation to the coming reign of God when *"Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other."* (Psalm 85:10)

How do we practice communion?

The Bible tells us to examine ourselves before participating in communion (1 Corinthians 11:28). In light of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, we are to be thoughtful and selfless. We recognize the body of the Lord in this meal compared to any other meal. In doing so, we can also participate in communion with grateful hearts for the incredibly generous grace of God through Christ.

Within Christianity, there is a great diversity in the practice of communion. Some churches serve communion once a month, some do more or less frequently. We celebrate a minimum of four times a year. Some churches use a common cup for the wine or juice, and some use individual cups. Some churches practice intinction (dipping the bread in the wine), and some serve the elements separately. Sometimes people are served in their seat. At other times they may be invited to come forward to the communion table. These practical decisions are largely left to the leaders of the congregation. At Sunnybrook, we use a variety of methods.

What is the biblical foundation for communion?

Communion is one of two sacraments we practice. The other is baptism. A *"sacrament"* is a religious act or ceremony of the Christian Church that is regarded as an outward visible sign of an inward divine grace. These are the two that Jesus instituted in the New Testament.

Jesus' Last Supper, the Passover meal He shared with His disciples on the night before He was crucified, is the biblical foundation for the Communion meal celebrated in His honor by Christians all over the world today. With His twelve friends gathered around Him for the traditional Jewish Passover meal, Jesus *"took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.'"* (Luke 22:19-20)

Who can take communion?

Communion is the *"believer's meal"*, a sacrament intended for Jesus' followers, by which they acknowledge and remember His work on the cross – the ultimate sacrifice made on our behalf for the forgiveness of the sins of humankind. Sunnybrook extends an *"open"* communion table, meaning the invitation to receive communion during a Sunnybrook service is open to any follower of Christ, regardless of membership at Sunnybrook, denominational affiliation, or spiritual tradition. Anyone who has accepted His forgiveness and surrendered their lives to Him is invited to share the communion table at Sunnybrook.

With regards to children, there is no right age. It is up to the spiritual leader of the household – parents. Requirements would be that the child has received Jesus Christ as Savior and that they understand what they are doing.

Those investigating Christianity who have not yet made a commitment of faith through Jesus Christ are encouraged to simply let the Communion *"plate"* pass by, utilizing that portion of the service to pray and invite God to bless their investigation of faith.

DISCIPLINE

Introduction

Discipline of pastors and leaders (includes the Elders on the Board and such others as may be defined by the Board of Directors) is addressed here. All other staff are under the administration of the Executive Director.

One of the most difficult decisions we will ever make as individual believers and as the Body of Christ is how we will respond to moral failure in a pastor or leader.

The following guidelines have been adopted after a study of Scripture by the Board of Directors and taking into consideration the needs of the leader or teacher, the needs of innocent third parties, and the protection of the ministries and reputation of Sunnybrook.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

The pages of Scripture speak honestly and consistently about the sinfulness of humans against a Holy God. In contrast to this natural propensity to hide and rationalize sin, God says that sin should be acknowledged, confessed, and brought under the light of truth (Ephesians 5:11, Psalm 51).

The Bible calls for an additional remedy when sin occurs in the life of a leader or pastor. The Bible speaks of a “stricter standard” for leaders and pastors because their higher visibility and influence more greatly affects the conduct of the whole church and its various forms of outreach (James 3:1). We hold the members of our staff to these standards because our staff has the responsibility and privilege to lead and teach the congregation through their lives and activities.

The biblical process for resolving issues of sin in the life of a leader or pastor includes appropriate acknowledgement of the sin to defined circles of people who were directly impacted by the leadership or teaching of that leader or teacher (1 Timothy 5:20).

When a leader or pastor falls to sin, we must seek to restore him or her gently as far as we are able in accordance with Galatians 6:1-2. These are the principles we will follow if it is necessary to discipline a leader or a pastor. We will allow each person to have an opportunity to be heard by the Board of Directors.

Procedure

The exercise of discipline may take the form of correction, mediation, suspension or termination according to the gravity of the offense. The only matters to be considered are those which can be shown to be against the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, or against the Articles of Incorporation of the church.

Procedure for Bringing a Charge

A charge is a written accusation of an offense filed with the Board of Directors specifying the name of the accused, the nature of the alleged offense, and the time, place, and attendant circumstances of the alleged offense. The secretary shall provide the accusation to the accused within three (3) days of its receipt. The accused may, if desired, file a written response to the Board of Directors within ten (10) days of receipt.

- A charge may be brought by a member in good standing. If the charge is brought by an individual, it must be signed by, and made in, the name of the individual who must come forward openly to support the charge.
- The Board of Directors may bring a charge.
- If filed by an individual, the charge shall be referred to a committee comprised of individuals not involved in the conflict, appointed by the Board of Directors to determine whether there is sufficient merit to warrant further consideration.
- The committee:
 - May interview the accuser, the accused, or any witnesses. A written notice to appear before the committee shall be issued by the committee.
 - Shall consider the number and creditability of witnesses and the nature of the alleged offense.
 - Shall report their findings and recommend appropriate discipline to the Board of Directors. That discipline may include mediation and appropriate sanctions which may include, but is not limited to, suspension or removal from office. The accused and the committee will be allowed to argue any other depositions that are appropriate to the offense and is consistent with Scripture and the governing documents of the church. Any conclusions must be made and approved by the Board of Directors. There is no appeal.

A person who has been suspended from office may be restored to office upon repentance and appropriate discipline if the Board of Directors are satisfied that the honor of the office will not be impaired and that the welfare of the church will be served by such a restoration.

GOVERNANCE

We believe God has appointed people to lead His church. Our governance structure consists of the Board of Directors comprised of six to eight ordained Elders and the ordained Lead Pastor.

Elders provide spiritual oversight, direction, and leadership for the overall church, entrusting the implementation of that direction to ministry leaders and staff, under the leadership of the Executive Team. The Executive Team is comprised of the Lead Pastor, the Executive Director, and others appointed by the Lead Pastor. Staff members are held accountable for fulfilling the Elder's direction. This form of governance allows the Elders to focus their gifts and time on their biblical mandate to lead and oversee the church, while allowing staff the opportunity to maximize their gifts and talents as they lead their ministries and make practical decisions on how to implement and carry out the direction provided by the Elders.

Accepting the volunteer role of Elder is not something to be taken lightly; Elders make extensive time commitments and take on deep spiritual responsibility in leading Sunnybrook. We are grateful for their selfless service on our behalf. Please refer to the Bylaws of Sunnybrook for the specific process of nomination, installation, and ordination of Elders.

Our Elders:

- Carry the ultimate responsibility and authority to see that the church remains on a true biblical course; that its members are being appropriately led and the body is being fed through insightful and accurate biblical teaching, and that the life of the church is being well managed with the assistance of competent and godly leaders.
- Guard the body of Christ against harmful influences, confronting those who are contradicting biblical truth or continuing in a pattern of sinful behavior.
- Help the Lead Pastor oversee the church by being an example and role model.
- Care about the spiritual and physical well-being of members; pray regularly for the sick.
- Conduct the annual review of the Lead Pastor.

Essential Components of an Elder

The biblical teaching on church leadership begins and ends with the character of the individuals who are called to the leadership team of the church. Our evaluation of

individuals who aspire to serve as Elders at Sunnybrook includes a comprehensive process to evaluate the "Five Cs," with the primary focus on Character.

1. First "C"—Character (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9)

- Above reproach - Elders must lead by example and demonstrate a lifestyle free from patterns of sin.
- One spouse - Elders, if married, must be devoted spouses.
- Temperate - Elders must be self-controlled, enslaved to nothing, and free from excesses.
- Prudent - Elders must be sober, sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
- Respectable - Elders must demonstrate a well-ordered life and honorable behavior.
- Hospitable - Elders must be unselfish with personal resources, willing to share blessings with others.
- Able to teach - Elders must be able to communicate truth and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way.
- Not addicted to wine - Elders must be free from addictions and willing to limit their liberty for the sake of others.
- Not pugnacious or quick-tempered - Elders must be gentle, patient, and able to exercise self-control in difficult situations.
- Uncontentious - Elders must not be given to quarreling or selfish argumentation.
- Free from the love of money - Elders must not be stingy, greedy, for sordid gain, or preoccupied with amassing material things.
- Manage own household - Elders must have a well-ordered household and a healthy family life.
- Not a new convert/not a new believer - Elders must not be new believers. They must have been a Christian long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and depth of spirituality. The individual must have been a voting member at Sunnybrook for at least three years.
- Good reputation with outsiders - Elders must be well-respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.
- Not self-willed - Elders must not be stubborn, or prone to forcing their opinions on others or abusing authority. They must be servant-minded.
- Loving what is good - Elders must desire the will of God in every decision.
- Just - Elders must desire to be fair and impartial. Their judgments must be based on scriptural principles.
- Devout - Elders must be devoted Christ followers, seeking to be conformed to His image. They must be committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and the guarding of their spiritual walk.

- Holding fast the faithful Word - Elders must be stable in the faith, obedient to the Word of God, and continually seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
2. Second "C"- Competence: Defined as specific, Holy Spirit-endowed gifts and abilities, combined with skills acquired through training and life experience.
 3. Third "C" - Chemistry: The intangible quality of being able to "fit" within the existing team. The ability to blend into and enrich the current circle of community and relational harmony within the Board.
 4. Fourth "C"- Courage: The ability, when needed, to enter into difficult exchanges and defend the faith, the church, and individuals in ways that preserve and maintain the community. The ability to speak the truth in love without destructive results.
 5. Fifth "C" - Calling: The ability to sense God's calling on one's life for a particular season of service to the body of Christ: "I think God is in this."

Essential Characteristics/Skills of Elders

- Able to keep confidential information
- Spiritual maturity
- Able to exhort in sound doctrine
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Excellent communication skills
- Team player
- Humility
- Conflict-resolution skills

Essential Spiritual Gifts for Elders

The spiritual gifts of discernment, wisdom, and leadership are considered foundational gifts for those who serve as Elders; however, the presence of other gifts such as teaching, administration, encouragement, and mercy greatly enhance Elder functioning.

1. Discernment

The gift of discernment is the divine enablement to distinguish between truth and error. It is the ability to discern the spirits, differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong (1 Corinthians 12:10; Acts 5:1-4; and Matthew 16:21-23).

2. Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is the divine enablement to apply spiritual truths effectively to meet needs in specific situations (1 Corinthians 12:8; James 3:13-18; 1 Corinthians 2:3-14; and Jeremiah 9:23-24).

3. Leadership

The gift of leadership is the divine enablement to envision the future of the church coupled with a humble heart to serve others (Genesis 12:1; Isaiah 43:18-19; Matthew 7:7; Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 22:27; John 10:3-4, 11; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; James 1:5).

LEAD PASTOR

Search Process

The Lead Pastor of Sunnybrook is an ordained minister who is called to build up Christ's church. In the event that it becomes necessary to add or replace an ordained pastor, especially as it refers to the Lead Pastor position, a search committee will be formed by the Board of Directors (the Board) for the specific task. The Board will review the current job description, update and approve the job description, and delegate the search function to the committee. The Committee will consist of no less than five persons - one of which is to be a current member of the Board.

The search process is not limited to any specific denomination, but it is imperative that any candidate considered is to wholly, one-hundred percent, endorse the Vision, Values, Beliefs, Essentials of the Faith and Statements of Sunnybrook.

Once the Search Committee narrows the field of applicants and makes a final selection, the candidate is to be presented to the Board and then to the congregation for final approval to issue a call.

Requirements for the Lead Pastor

- Set as a guideline of personal behavior the standards required in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4
- Uphold the vision and mission of Sunnybrook
- Prepare for and conduct worship services; ensure the observance of the sacraments and lead the church in proclaiming the gospel to the church and community
- Serve as the evangelical leader in seeking to win the unsaved
- Set aside time each day to commune with God
- Continually seek to improve ministry skills through mentoring relationships and continuing educational opportunities
- Submit to an annual review to be conducted by the Personnel Committee of the Board
- Develop leaders from within the congregation by instituting and promoting leadership development education
- Participate in a portion of Membership Class
- Serve as the Chair of the Executive Team and the President of the Board of Directors
- Be invested and involved with other pastors in like ministries, as well as pastors in the area, members, staff, and community.

- Work in coordination with other ministry staff to ensure compassionate pastoral care and trained officiants are available for weddings, funerals, visitation, counseling, etc.
- Recognize the unwritten expectation that the Lead Pastor serves as the chief fundraiser, thus promoting the financial responsibilities of the congregation through involvement with fund-raising campaigns and appropriate messages from the pulpit. Whatever it takes to promote the mission and ministry of Sunnybrook
- Declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ
- Call publicly on the name of the Lord on behalf of the whole congregation
- Celebrate Christ's Holy Sacraments: presiding over baptisms and the Lord's Supper
- Be pastor and teacher
- Share people's joys and sorrows
- Encourage the faithful
- Recall those who fall away
- Help the sick and dying
- Proclaim God's Word

Skills and Abilities

- Key gifts in preaching, leadership, vision casting, evangelism, and teaching
- A committed Christian who has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ which is evidenced by his/her daily walk with God and interaction with others
- A passion for excellence

Education/Experience

- A minimum of a Masters of Divinity from an institution compatible with the teachings and standards of Sunnybrook
- Previous experience is appropriate

Specific Duties

The Lead Pastor of Sunnybrook, by leading and in conjunction with the Board, is responsible for the following, but will delegate to Elders and staff so these duties are carried out effectively.

Provide Spiritual Oversight

- Confront false teaching and behavior contradictory to biblical truth and implement appropriate church discipline
- Maintain the administration of Baptism and Communion as instituted by Christ
- Review and evaluate teaching and curricula for biblical accuracy and consistency with Sunnybrook values (weekend services, classes, and sub-ministry materials)
- Implement and monitor compliance with board policy
- Mandate ministry to the poor and distressed

Lead Sunnybrook

- Participate (as needed) in the biblical process of conflict resolution outlined by Jesus in Matthew 18
- Direct people into appropriate processes for guidance, assistance, and conflict resolution
- Respond to letters/phone calls from the church body, staff, or public

Providing Care, Correction, and Oversight in the Following Areas

- Oversee processes leading to conflict resolution
- Manage situations where people, particularly participating members, are experiencing significant relational difficulties or moral failure
- Anoint with oil those who are sick
- Affirm the work of the Elders

MARRIAGE

Introduction

In this Statement we outline Sunnybrook's position on topics related to gender, sexuality, and marriage. Our contemporary culture is currently experiencing significant conflict and change in these areas, which creates confusion and results in a deep need for the Church to clearly articulate God's truth.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

We seek to derive our understanding of God's truth on these topics (and all topics) from His Word. It is abundantly clear throughout the entirety of Scripture that God's will for humankind is for one man and one woman to be joined together as one flesh. The Bible consistently elevates the covenant man-woman relationship, and promotes sexuality within the context of marriage. Paul even uses the marriage as a metaphor describing the relationship between Christ and the Church.

A comprehensive discussion on the breadth of Scripture, which underlies essential Christian belief surrounding the topics of gender, marriage, sexuality, singleness, same-sex attraction, divorce, and the myriad of associated subjects is beyond the scope of this Elder statement. An interested reader is encouraged to reference the document titled "A Biblical Analysis of Marriage, Singleness, and Sexual Practice" as a starting place for deeper study.

Statement of Belief

The following statements are intended to provide a basic understanding of Sunnybrook's belief in the area of gender, sexuality, and marriage:

- We believe we are equal at the foot of the cross. All persons are loved by God and are welcome to worship at Sunnybrook regardless of gender, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- We believe that God's design for marriage is one man to one woman. Polygamy, open marriage, and same-sex marriage fall outside God's design for mankind and are prohibited by Scripture.
- We believe that marriage is a lifelong, exclusive, interdependent relationship between a man and woman. Violations of the marriage covenant are an affront to God and are prohibited by Scripture.

- We believe that for those who marry, sexual expression is a gift from God given exclusively to them to enhance their covenant relationship in many ways. Sexual expression within God's design is always a mirror of His oneness involving the whole person uniting a man and woman into "*one flesh*." Sexual expression outside the bounds of marriage stands in contrast to God's design for intimacy and is prohibited by Scripture.
- We believe that singleness is also a gift from God. Singleness, whether a short season or a lifelong journey, allows greater focus to ongoing sanctification and dedication to God's Kingdom purposes.

MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS, AND SEXUAL PRACTICE (A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS)

Introduction

This document is designed to provide deeper study into the statement on marriage. Here we will outline our church's position on a number of important topics related to marriage and sexuality. This document is not just about divorce or premarital sex or gay marriage—although we do address those controversial issues. It is rather first and foremost an exposition on the wonder and beauty of our sexuality and God's design for its full expression within a marriage. It is about celebrating and affirming the differences among us and encouraging each individual to honor God with his or her sexuality within the parameters and boundaries for purity that He has established.

In a culture that tells us that seeking pleasure is the highest virtue, it is about putting sexuality in its proper perspective. Viewing it as a wonderful privilege and responsibility that should never be abused or dishonored, not as an essential element of happiness or fulfillment. In addition, this discussion seeks to honor God's direction with regard to our sexual expression. This is a very counter-cultural idea that followers of Jesus willingly submit to faithfully and obediently even when doing so requires sacrifice. We believe that this document accurately reflects biblical teaching on this sensitive topic and we resolutely stand with Jesus and His loving call to purity.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

As in all matters, we consider Scripture to be the basis of our beliefs related to marriage and sexuality, and we see throughout the Old and New Testaments that God uses marriage and sexual imagery to illustrate the intimacy He wants us to experience with Him (Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:14-20; 1 Corinthians 6:17; Romans 7:1-6; Ephesians 5:21-33). We also see that God does not view either marriage or singleness as an inherently favored status—both have advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, both sexual expression and celibacy can help us in our pursuit of spiritual intimacy and holiness, depending on the person and the circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:32-35). In addition, we see that God has clearly defined the situations within which sexual activity is consistent with His design and purposes. Specifically, God reserves sexual intimacy for marriage, which according to Scripture is an interdependent, exclusive, and lifelong commitment between a man and a woman who are likeminded in love and faith. In every other relational circumstance or stage of life, God's call is to remain celibate. Behavior that is incompatible with God's design for sexual intimacy does not lead to the truest and best life for any human being.

We are quick to add that although many have succumbed to the lure of various sexual sins, God's grace is assuredly and freely offered to anyone wishing to claim it. Despite the pain or shame we may feel, God's redemptive power is always stronger than the destructive force of our human recklessness.

We recognize that the church has not always stewarded well the balance of Biblical truth with loving grace and acceptance in areas relating to sexuality. Sadly, it has been far too common in the Christian church to place undue emphasis on scriptural definitions of sinful behaviors and lose sight of the outrageous love, forgiveness, and inclusiveness that Jesus brought for all the children of God. This has caused undue judgment, exclusion, and shame for people struggling to follow God's creation design for sexuality. As followers of Jesus, we challenge all people to God's Biblical standards with a spirit soaked in grace and an awareness of the confusion and brokenness that is rampant in our fallen world.

Sunnybrook believes that outside of Jesus, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Temptation is not sin. It is temptation. If you are tempted and you abstain from that temptation, you have not sinned.

Furthermore, the lifestyle you choose to lead is between you and God. While Sunnybrook is not a "police" department, it is our hope that through your relationship with God, the understanding of sins you may be committing may become clear to you.

It is our intention to boldly speak the truth of God on these matters while extending a radically loving hand of grace and inclusion to every individual. Each person is infinitely valuable and created in the image of God. Those seeking to find Christ will not be hindered and those seeking to grow in Christlikeness will be spurred on.

Based on our interpretation of Scripture and much prayerful consideration, we hold the following beliefs, which are further explained and elaborated upon below:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| WE BELIEVE | all people are made in God's image, have turned away from Him, and are all offered unconditional love and acceptance through Jesus Christ; |
| WE BELIEVE | we are called as children of God to holiness and the pursuit of intimacy and communion with God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit; |
| WE BELIEVE | sex within God's design is always a mirror of His oneness involving the whole person uniting a man and woman into "one flesh" within the marriage covenant; |

- WE BELIEVE** God's design for marriage beautifully reflects His holy character and the interdependent community – the "oneness" – that eternally exists within the Trinity;
- WE BELIEVE** for those who marry, sexual expression is a gift from God given to them - and only to them - to solidify and enhance their covenant relationship;
- WE BELIEVE** marriage is a lifelong, exclusive, and interdependent relationship between a man and woman in which both, sometimes as individuals and sometimes as partners, participate in God's redemptive purposes in this world;
- WE BELIEVE** at some point in all our lives - and for others of us all our lives – we experience singleness, and those eras can be a gift from God allowing for focused participation in God's work in our lives and His redemptive purposes in this world;
- WE BELIEVE** violations of the marriage covenant and sexual expression outside its bounds stand in contrast to the love-infused Kingdom of God Jesus came to bring, and are prohibited by Scripture;
- WE BELIEVE** God's grace, forgiveness, and capacity to redeem is far greater than any human shortcoming and as His followers, we love and embrace each and every individual as an infinitely valuable person created in the image of God. All while relating His truth with the same love and grace we have each so undeservedly received.

Creation, Holiness, and Sexuality

Our God is a holy God (Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:3) which means that God is intrinsically pure and without sin or "*shifting shadow*" (James 1:17). He can be counted on to always do right, and be right. Scripture teaches that because God is holy and desires fellowship with His creatures we are called to be holy just like Him (Leviticus 11:45, 19:2; 1 Peter 1:13-16). We are to pursue holiness in all we do (Hebrews 12:14; Ephesians. 4:24; 2 Corinthians 7:1) and to keep ourselves from succumbing to the harmful practices that hold people captive (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:11). The work of Jesus Christ on the cross and the dynamic of the Holy Spirit living within us empower us for this endeavor. We don't pursue holiness to court His favor, but rather receive His favor—His forgiveness for our decidedly unholy character and actions—and then pursue holiness because of His prior gracious acceptance. The result of this pursuit of holiness is a greater intimacy and communion with God, the very thing for which we were

created. In that state, we know and are known by our Heavenly Father, and experience here on earth a taste of the Kingdom of God.

When God created humans He created us to be divine image bearers (Genesis 1:26-27). This suggests that we are like God in a way not unlike a child is like a father. We know that God is infinite and sinless and we are finite and sinful, however our role as image bearers reminds us that despite these clear differences, we do have things in common. One element we have in common with God is that once we were created, we were diversified into male and female creations (Genesis 2:18-25). In this way, we were created to mirror and resemble the distinction yet the interdependence in the divine union of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26). While Scripture notes our unity in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28) we do have unique gendered roles to play in God's creation, e.g., mothers, fathers, husbands, and wives. Our diversification as male and female, and thus our sexual identity, is part of God's good creation plan. Our sexuality is a part of who we are, not what we do. An analysis of how we are to steward our sexuality is an analysis of how we are to steward our likeness to the image of God.

God's Design for the Marriage Union

Immediately after God diversified human beings as male and female (Genesis 2:22). He gave us the gift of the opportunity for marital partnership between men and women: *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."* (Genesis 2:24-25)

One flesh...naked and unashamed. These biblical descriptors summarize the intellectual reality and intention behind sex. But sex is much more than a cerebral experience. Such sterile language does not sufficiently capture the whole-body experience that sex actually is. That is precisely why this topic is so important to our lives as human beings and followers of Jesus Christ. It is core to our identity. It is biologically the very source of the propagation of our species. And socially, spiritually, as well as personally, it is perhaps the place of our greatest wounds, shame, and dysfunction.

The *"one flesh"* description is the basis of all proper understanding of how sex is to function. It is a foundational principle; both the Old and New Testaments as well as Jesus himself use the *"one flesh"* phrase when talking about it (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:31). In addition, one-flesh sex takes place where both partners are *"naked and unashamed"*. That is only possible where love and security are at the foundation of the relationship. To be seen without covering or pretense—to be *naked*—is at the very heart of what it means to be intimate. Sex is meant to be expressed only in such a relationship. It does not create security or intimacy; it supports and amplifies the love and intimacy already existing. Attempts to use sex to create those elements of a relationship actually have the opposite affect: we become more ashamed, not less so,

and feel used or cheated when our bodies are demanded without our souls being treasured as well.

Sex therefore is by God's design, at its very core, a unifying act. It brings two into one. Theologically, such oneness has important parallels. When the famous Old Testament passage declares, "*Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one...*" (Deuteronomy 6:4), it does not use the Hebrew word for "one" that signifies singularity (*yacheed*). Rather, the text employs a Hebrew word that means unity (*echad*). When Adam and Eve are told in Genesis that they will become "*one flesh*," the text uses that same word for unity (*echad*) rather than the word for singularity (*yacheed*). Just as God, the Trinity, is one God in three Persons (*echad*), so people in marriage are one flesh in two persons (*echad*). That profound parallel is of supreme importance when we seek to understand God's intention for a healthy and life-affirming expression of our sexuality.

The above word study leads us to conclude that, by God's design, sexual expression mirrors God's own oneness. It further implies sex is essentially relational, rather than impersonal. It is not a mere bodily experience (though many people engage in sexual options that reduce it to that) but involves the whole person. It must take place only in a relationally stable, committed environment - the context of monogamous marriage. In that setting, sexual expression reaches its highest ideal; any other context not only robs sex of this possibility, it robs the people involved of their dignity, freedom and lasting joy.

Throughout Scripture, marriage, as modeled by Adam and Eve is affirmed and celebrated (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Ephesians 5:31). It is the norm, the quintessential marital relationship, against which all other forms of partnering are compared and contrasted. The characteristics of marriage modeled by Adam and Eve show us the key elements of God's design for marriage.

Adam and Eve were likeminded in love and faith, demonstrating God's plan for marriage as a partnership of equals ("*evenly yoked*" as 2 Corinthians 6:14 puts it), which allowed them to thrive. This theme of spiritual like-mindedness as a condition for a God-honoring marriage is repeated throughout Scripture including Old Testament warnings to Israelites not to intermarry with pagan nations (Deuteronomy 7:3; Joshua 23:12; 1 Kings 11:2) and in the teachings of Paul concerning the complexities of mixed faith marriages (1 Corinthians 7:12-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

God's design is that the marriage union be lifelong. Scripture upholds the permanence of marriage noting that a man will leave his family and be united to or cleave to his wife (Genesis 2:24). Jesus taught that while a man and a woman may still be two people after they are married, they possess a "*oneness*" that binds them into a single entity (*echad*) that has enormous spiritual significance. To underscore this, He noted that no one should separate those whom God has joined in marriage (Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:8-9).

Paul also addressed the permanence of marriage comparing the marriage union to the permanent union between Christ and His Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Paul taught that marriage is a covenant relationship and that covenants are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). God's intent for individuals who choose to marry is that the union will last a lifetime, so it breaks His heart when divorce dissolves the commitment they have made to one another (Malachi 2:15-16; Matthew 19:6). Therefore, those who enter into a marriage covenant should do so humbly, selflessly, and intentionally in the spirit and attitude of Christ (Philippians 2:1-5).

God's design is that the marriage union be exclusive. The cleaving of husband to wife (Genesis 2:24) suggests uniting with each other at the expense of all others. To say, *"I do"* with one means to say, *"I won't"* with everyone else. Just as God's covenant with Israel was monogamous, so our covenant marriage relationship is designed to be exclusive. Jesus upheld the marriage vows of each spouse in His teaching affirming that each spouse is to love, honor, and cherish the other in all circumstances (Mark 10:2-12). Similarly, Paul spoke of a godly love, mutual respect, and constant fidelity among spouses (1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 25-40; Ephesians 5:21-24; Colossians 3:18-25). The whole of Scripture makes clear that marriage is set apart by God to be respected, cherished, and protected (Hebrews 13:4).

God's design is that the marriage union be between a man and a woman. The creation plan for marriage is a reunion of the man and woman that God previously diversified (Genesis 2:22-24). Scripture makes clear that God created us man and woman (Genesis 1:27) and that a man is to leave his parents (Genesis 2:24) and unite or cleave to his wife in marriage (Genesis 2:24). Our gendered character is part of our true humanity and this joining of man to woman in marriage is upheld in Scripture as a holy act of God (Matthew 19:6).

Although no marriage is perfect, the examples we see in Scripture of healthy marriages support this characteristic including the marriage of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4) and the marriage of Jesus' parents Mary and Joseph (Matthew 1-2; Luke 12). Song of Solomon is a beautiful book celebrating the sensuality that is rightfully present between a loving husband and wife. Paul's letter to the church in Rome affirms God's creation plan for marriage between a man and a woman (Romans 1:24-28).

Lifelong, exclusive marriage between a man and a woman is a means for us to participate in God's redemptive purposes. As creatures created for fellowship with our holy Creator, we are to first seek God's kingdom in all we do (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31; Deuteronomy 4:29; Colossians 3:2). While doing so, men and women in marriage unions have the opportunity to experience some unique gifts from God. Marriage affords us the opportunity to participate in procreation (Genesis 1:28). Marriage also allows us to exercise joint stewardship over God's creation (Genesis 1:26, 28). Marriage is a means for us to experience an earthly covenant partnership. Marriage is not simply a casual commitment or a simple promise (1 Corinthians 11:11), rather it is a covenant

relationship between a man and a woman (Malachi 2:14) and between each marriage partner and God (Proverbs 2:17). The covenant of marriage mirrors both God's covenant love for Israel (Genesis 17:7) and Christ's love of the Church (Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7). Marriage also allows us to experience human intimacy in a sexual union (Genesis 2:24). Scripture teaches that this sexual intimacy is a good and wholesome gift given by God that is meant to be enjoyed (Proverbs 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 4:3-5.) The denial of the gift of sexual intimacy in marriage is not virtuous or noble (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Human sexuality requires careful stewardship. When we experience sexual intimacy, we are uniting in ways that we do not fully understand (1 Corinthians 6:15-17) and having physical experiences that have consequences for our souls (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

God's Design for Singleness

Scripture teaches that God assigns some of us to be married and others of us to be single (and we are all single for at least part of our lives). Singleness can be an opportunity to participate with great personal focus in the redemptive purposes of God. The Apostle Paul holds singleness in high regard mostly because it has fewer distractions from spiritual matters than married life. In other words, single people have the *"gift"* of availability - they have more time and energy to promote the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 7:7, 32-34). In the Old Testament, the material blessings of marriage and family were often viewed as evidence of God's favor and blessing. For this reason, marriage was the norm in the Old Testament times and singleness was seen as a lack of God's favor. In the New Testament, we are fully blessed in Christ with or without marital and other worldly blessings. Paul described it this way: *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."* (Philippians 4:12) This realization, that we are complete in Christ whether married or single (or rich or poor, etc.), affirms that a life without sexual expression is not deprived or incomplete - anymore than Jesus, who was fully human like us, was deprived or incomplete in His singleness. Rather, it affirms God's high view of singleness and makes clear that singleness is part of God's plan for some that enables them to participate most effectively in His redemptive work.

Neither marriage nor singleness is a preferred state. Paul goes so far as to call singleness a *"gift"* wishing that all believers could have this gift as he has it (1 Corinthians 7:7). Jesus also affirmed the gift of singleness when He taught the validity of choosing to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:11-12), a choice He Himself made. Part of God's plan for singleness includes non-intimate opposite gender relationships. These are a healthy and necessary part of a life of singleness and a part of God's creation plan in creating us male and female. It should be noted that not all single people are necessarily *called* to singleness. Some are single just for now, and God's will for them is to be married someday. Scripture teaches that in this state of preparation for

marriage, we are to be patient, prayerful, and faithful to the Lord (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Romans 12:9-13; Galatians 5:22).

As we strive for sexual purity and holiness while single, Scripture does offer us instruction. Just as in marriage, those in a state of singleness are above all else called to be holy (Leviticus 11:45), while our desire for intimacy is indeed acknowledged (1 Corinthians 7:1-2). Scripture clearly reserves sexual expression for marriage and demands celibacy in our singleness (1 Corinthians 6:12-20).

Our bodies are meant for the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:13; Romans 6:12-14) and as believers we steward our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Our bodies are to be handled with the care and intentionality that we would handle holy things. God's plan for celibacy in singleness calls us to treat our bodies in such a way that we foster intimacy and dependence on Him (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Distortions of and Departures from God's Plan for Purity

In our call to holiness as God's creatures, we are to control our bodies and our desires (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). However, we live in a broken world where God's creation plan has been distorted by sin. This has corrupted every dimension of human life including our sexuality. Our culture endorses pleasure seeking in our sexuality regardless of the form it takes. Additionally, our sexuality informs our identity and view of self. This helps explain why issues related to sexuality can be a highly sensitive and highly emotional challenge for many.

While those who trust in Christ are fully equipped for this struggle by the gift of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, our alienation from God and from each other causes us to not always choose the path towards holiness. In these situations, we see violations of God's plan for purity and departures from God's plan for human sexuality.

Adultery

Adultery is the betrayal of the *"one flesh"* marriage vow introduced in Genesis 2:24. God's plan is that marriage is exclusive, and adultery defiles the marriage union by violating this exclusivity.

In the Old Testament, adultery was clearly and strictly forbidden by the seventh of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18). Marriage was the proper domain for sex, and no other context for it received God's blessing. Scripture in many places also shows that adultery is damaging to everyone involved—harming even those not directly involved (Proverbs 6:23-35; 7:6-27). That adultery brings with it God's judgment (Jeremiah 23:11-14; Ezekiel 22:11; Malachi 3:5).

In the New Testament, Jesus expanded the Old Testament definition of marital fidelity to include emotional fidelity including the call to sexual purity in our thoughts and imaginations (Matthew 5:27-28). Marriage faithfulness means keeping emotional boundaries healthy so that the sanctity of our relationship with our spouses is preserved. Sexual transgressions and adultery can therefore go beyond the bounds of physical intimacy and appear in private activities or emotional affairs with others. Striking the delicate balance between grace and consequence, we see Scripture teach that adultery requires repentance if one is to be included in the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce is the intentional termination of a marriage union while remarriage is the subsequent formation of a marriage union after divorce. It is clear from Scripture that God's plan for marriage is that it be lifelong (Matthew 19:6) and when marriages end in divorce, it breaks God's heart (Malachi 2:16). The Old Testament made concessions for divorce as an accommodation to the effects of the Fall. These concessions allowed a man to divorce his wife for nearly any reason as long as he formally provided for her a certificate of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1). Jesus made clear that this was not God's original design for marriage (Matthew 19:4-8).

Jesus restored God's original design for marriage thus revoking the divorce concession granted to Israel in the Old Testament (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9). Jesus taught and upheld God's original creation plan for marriage prohibiting divorce except for cases of unfaithfulness (sexual immorality). Paul further sought to clarify what constituted justifiable divorce by teaching that spousal abandonment of a believing spouse by a non-believing spouse is a valid cause for divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

Divorce is the tragic result of what becomes of our humanity when it loses the fight against sin and brokenness. Whenever a marriage fails, we should mourn it as tragic. There should, however, be no error so grave that it cannot be forgiven; no mistake beyond the reach of grace. Likewise, our God is a God of renewal and restoration. In some cases, this means restoring a marriage to its original partnership. In other cases, it means that remarriage is an opportunity for renewal and hope to get it right the second time having learned valuable lessons from one's former mistakes.

Extramarital Sexual Intimacy

Intimacy of any kind is to be pursued thoughtfully and reverently, and the Bible never views sexual intimacy as a casual expression to be allowed between any two consenting adults. Scripture teaches that sexual expression is reserved for the marriage union as described above. To pursue sexual intimacy outside of a marriage commitment is called "immorality" throughout the Bible (Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:12;

2 Corinthians 12:21). This includes sexual activity of any nature. Immorality is not just intercourse, but all of the varieties of sexual stimulation and arousal that people can engage in.

In a highly sexualized culture like ours, this may seem like an exceedingly difficult teaching as it requires some to refrain completely from sexual activity, either for a time or throughout their lifetime. When considered in the context of the self-control, sacrifice, and surrender that God asks of us, and that Christ modeled for us, this call to self-denial does not seem nearly as severe. As described in the singleness discussion above, celibacy should not be viewed as punishment or deprivation, but rather as a call to purity and obedience to God.

Because Scripture prohibits sexual activity outside of marriage and God intended for marriage to be between a man and a woman, it follows that sexual activity between members of the same gender is not compatible with God's design. While the Old Testament commentary on same sex sexual activity may be addressing sexual violence and sexual activity related to cultic idolatry, the New Testament speaks clearly to this issue.

In Romans 1, Paul takes the Old Testament prohibition on same sex sexual activity out of its cultural context of violence and idolatry and puts it in the context of God's creation order and the New Covenant of Christ (Romans 1:26-27). In Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, he is careful to note that both the initiating party in same-sex intimacy (*arsenokoitai*) and the passive or compliant party (*malakoi*) are operating outside the directives of the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). In similar fashion, in Paul's first letter to Timothy, he notes the immorality of both heterosexual and homosexual sexual activity that is outside of God's planned design (*pornoi* and *arsenokoitai*) (1 Timothy 1:8-11). The church at Corinth's principled, yet loving, expression of this truth to its community represents a wonderful example of the beauty and power of redemption. The church welcomed those who had previously engaged in the immoral behaviors described by Paul, and some of them eventually experienced conversion and were transformed into devoted followers of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11).

It is important to distinguish between sinful tendencies and sinful practice. One may be inclined to theft or violence or addiction - but the more important question is whether one acts on those inclinations. The same is true of sexual morality. What we do with the tendencies inside our hearts defines us morally. To have same-sex attraction is quite different from seeking same-sex partners or viewing same-sex pornography and acting out. In all areas of our lives, we are all called to choose either God's perfect desires for us or to follow our own easily misled desires. By God's strength and grace, our church has members and attenders who experience same-sex attraction yet are committed to celibacy. At Sunnybrook we are committed to loving, supporting, and coming alongside anyone struggling to choose God's counter-cultural stance of purity.

Scripture also prohibits sexual activity between a man and a woman outside the bounds of marriage. This includes all sexual expression, not just intercourse, as discussed above, and also the practice of cohabitation outside of marriage. Scripture teaches that we are to avoid sexual temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:12-15), that we are to avoid the appearance of sin (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:22), and that we are not to hinder each other's obedience to and intimacy with Christ (Mark 9:42; Romans 13:10; 14:13). Living together without being married goes against all of those injunctions. Additionally, the patience and self-control in choosing not to cohabit serves to prepare us for the responsibilities and necessary self-discipline that makes a marriage work (Malachi 2:15; Matthew 5:5-7; Romans 12:9-12; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22).

Solitary Distortions

Because God's creation plan for human sexuality is that we experience sexual activity within an interdependent marriage union, solitary arousal through pornography or explicit literature are violations of God's plan. Sometimes, using pornography becomes a substitute for sexually connecting with one's spouse, leading to separation rather than closeness where sex is concerned. In addition, pornography almost always depicts violations of God's creation design for human sexuality including exploitative and distorted views of sexual intimacy and of others who are created in the image of God.

This inaccurate depiction has a destructive effect on the viewer. Jesus goes so far as noting that cultivating impure sexual thoughts toward another person, even where there is no physical contact with that person, is a sin against God's design (Matthew 5:27-28). So, while we may not engage in actual sexual contact with another human being, dwelling on a fantasy that includes either a real person or a mere graphic depiction of someone short-circuits the oneness with a spouse that God wants sex to foster.

Polygamy

Polygamy is the practice of having more than one spouse (typically a man having more than one wife). Scripture read in its entirety makes clear that marriage is designed to be a union between only one man and one woman. The Bible narrative begins with a prototypical marriage between one man and one woman - Adam and Eve (one groom and one bride). And, in the last book of the Bible, the story ends with a marriage between one "*man*" and one "*woman*" - Jesus, the groom, and His bride, the Church. Note that we are collectively called His bride, not His brides (as if He were bound to us as a man with multiple partners) lending strong evidence a plural marriage to Jesus (polygamy) is repugnant to God.

In the Old Testament, polygamy is merely - perhaps reluctantly - regulated but not commended (also like divorce or slavery) while the New Testament offers no examples of polygamy. Despite the occasional practice of polygamy among the rich and

powerful (rarely among the average man), the Old Testament on numerous occasions references the monogamous nature of the relationship between God and Israel (Ezra 9-10; Isaiah 54:5-10; Ezekiel 16, the book of Hosea). These passages, along with the Genesis Adam and Eve archetype lend compelling support to the conclusion that marriage was always meant by design to be exclusive. As we see in Revelation, our Lord's eternal union with us is cast in monogamous rather than polygamous metaphor, further evidencing the divine approval of this marital arrangement and no other.

Grace

A holy God created all people, He loves them and delights in them (Psalm 149:4). None of us is outside the reach of this divine love. He is our Heavenly Father and as an earthly father loves his children to the finite capacity of his love, God loves all of us with the limitlessness of His holy love. We have been created to love God in return (Deuteronomy 6:5), allowing God to have deep and loving fellowship with all of us as His creation.

Out of love, God has called us to be holy, just as He is holy, in order to facilitate the closest and most intimate fellowship with Him. We are called to steward the image of God created in each of us by striving for holiness, not simply out of obedience but because our loving Father knows what is best for us. He knows that our pursuit of holiness is a pursuit of knowing and being known by Him. Our sexuality is part of that holiness, part of who we are, and part of how God created us. We are to steward our bodies and our sexuality, pursuing purity that facilitates intimate communion with our loving Heavenly Father.

Our challenge is that we all live in a fallen and broken world where the order of creation is no longer intact. Evil runs rampant in our world clouding and confusing the purposes of God. It has infected every human heart and has stained our moral innocence so that we all choose sin and alienate ourselves from relationship with our Creator (Colossians 1:21; Romans 3:23). Our sinful nature through the lens of our hedonistic culture allows our sexuality, part of how we were created, to appear as a casual tool designed for our immediate pleasure and gratification. In the most extreme perversions, evil causes our sexuality to be viewed as a tool for power, control, and manipulation. With sin distorting our view of our sexuality, we can easily cause great damage to each other and can unintentionally destroy our spiritual intimacy with God. Our fallen and depraved nature is so severe that Scripture makes clear that we are not capable of saving ourselves (Romans 7:21-24).

But God's love for all people - no exclusions - is so boundless that He has enacted a plan to rescue us from evil, which is present in the world and present within each of us. He longs to restore everything back to the way it was: a perfect, sinless creation that includes our full and complete intimacy with Him. Through God's covenant relationship with Israel He promised to send a Savior. Through the fulfillment of that

promise culminating in the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection and ascension to heaven, God flooded our broken world with grace and mercy. The bridge of infinite grace now spans the chasm between our holy God and fallen humanity. This grace and forgiveness is available to anyone who chooses to accept God's offer of rescue through Jesus. Our old sinful natures are washed clean and we are made new creations in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christ has established His Church to accomplish His redemptive work in this world. We as the Church are to live out this mandate with unity, having our differences subsumed by our common love, grace, and acceptance in Christ Jesus. We believe that all people deserve and desire to know God's love in an intimate relationship with Him. We graciously honor the journey of all people seeking to follow Christ and God's plan for human sexuality knowing that doing so enables us to realize our full relational potential with our Father. God's remedy to sin's deception allows us to see our sexuality as God intended it and allows us to steward it pursuing holiness and communion with Him.

As we all support each other in this pursuit, we do so full of grace, knowing that no sin in this world is beyond the loving hand of God offering every one of us restoration through Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). We deeply desire to increasingly be a community of people whose arms are opened wide to anyone seeking the love and grace of Jesus Christ. We rejoice with all of heaven when people, who are broken and confused because of our fallen world, are wrecked by the love and grace of God. When they choose to accept God's gift of divine rescue and restoration.

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF ELDERS

Introduction

The selection process and character of Elders, who serve as the Board of Directors, is outlined in these Statements and the Bylaws. Once elected, a person who has never served as an Elder is ordained by the current Board of Directors. All elected Elders are installed.

Newly elected Elders are to be ordained (if they have not held this office before) at the first Elder meeting in January. Ordination is a laying on of hands ceremony.

Process for Nominating, Installing & Ordaining Elders

Preamble: Sunnybrook is a growing, vibrant congregation with a mission and passion to seek, grow, and send. In this setting, leadership is highly valued and consistently sought. Election of Elders who are gifted leaders is of prime importance. These persons are to be role models for the congregants and are to live a life that reflects Jesus Christ in all of their actions and activities.

Nominating Committee - Composition and Appointment: The Nominating Committee will consist of one current Elder, one Elder going off the board and the Executive Director. The Executive Director will serve as the Chairperson. They are to be appointed by the Board of Directors. The Lead Pastor serves on the Committee in an ex-officio capacity. The official Sunnybrook belief is that it is most appropriate for leaders to choose leaders.

The Chairperson is responsible to adhere to the timetable, ensure that procedure is followed - especially the questionnaires and interviews, present the slate to the Board of Directors and congregation, and calling the appropriate meetings.

Qualification of Nominees: All confessing Sunnybrook members over the age of 18 years and in good standing are eligible for nomination – but those persons who have completed available Sunnybrook leadership training will be given preference.

Terms of Nominees: Nominees will be eligible to serve two consecutive three-year terms. After serving either one or two three-year terms, Elders are eligible to be re-

elected after being off the Board of Directors for one year. If an Elder is unable to complete a term, current Board of Elders will select his/her replacement.

Solicitation of Nominees: There will be no official ballots submitted by the congregation. In lieu of a ballot process, two weeks prior to a committee meeting, the congregation will be made aware of the timeframe and expectations. They will be encouraged to submit names of qualified candidates to the Executive Director. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to notify the congregation.

Review of Nominees: Candidates will be reviewed by the Nominating Committee to determine those persons who are qualified to hold office.

Selection of Nominees: An Elder interview form will be sent to all viable candidates that will include questions regarding their spiritual life and personal walk with God. Candidates will provide answers and return the questionnaire to a nominating committee. Upon receipt of the questionnaire, the Nominating Committee will rank the candidates according to the Biblical principles established in (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) The top-ranked candidates will be interviewed by the Nominating Committee.

Preference may be given to current Elders who are eligible to serve a second three-year term.

After the interviews, the Committee will assemble a single slate of candidates to be presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

Approved/Election: After the Board of Directors approves the single slate; it will be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting in December for election to office.

Installation/Ordination: Newly elected Elders will be ordained (if they have never held this office before) at an Elder meeting, and presented to the congregation at a morning worship service in January. Ordination is a laying on of hands ceremony.

MONTH	TIME TABLE
September – November	Committee solicits nominations to fill vacancies that may exist
September – November	Committee sends and reviews questionnaires
September – November	Committee conducts interviews
November	Single slate of nominees presented to the Board of Directors for approval
December	Congregation elects Elders at annual congregational meeting
January	Elders are presented at a worship service

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF LEAD PASTOR

Introduction

Upon acceptance of a call as described in the Governance section, a lead pastor will be ordained and installed by Sunnybrook. The Vice-President or his/her appointed delegate will preside at the Ordination Service which is to be a public service for the entire congregation.

Service of Ordination and Installation of a Lead Pastor

The following is the liturgy to be used at the time of the ordination/installation of a lead pastor:

The Presiding Officer of the board will begin:

Prayer

Let's pray.

God, we are thankful that you have always guided your people by your Holy Spirit. We joyfully live and serve you, learning how to do that more and more every day through your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen

Explanation

Beloved in the Lord, Holy Scripture teaches us that God our heavenly Father gathers to himself from among the lost children of this world a Church to life eternal, and that in this work of grace he is pleased to use our ministry. The Lord Jesus himself provides us with the grace we need to serve him, as affirmed by the Apostle Paul: *"And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Questioning

The Presiding Officer will ask the candidate to stand before the congregation.

_____, the Elders of Sunnybrook have found you to be qualified as a person of faith and Christian character, ready to serve within the Church. May it be clear to everyone here that you are willing to accept this office and to serve faithfully. I ask that you answer truthfully to these questions:

Do you believe that there is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do.

The Presiding Officer will invite the congregation to stand:

Please stand with _____, and say together the Apostles' Creed.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary,
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The congregation may be seated. The candidate will remain standing.

_____,
Do you believe that you have been called to serve God's Church, and to be a faithful servant of the Word?

I do.

Do you believe the whole Word of God and salvation through the cross; denying all teachings that say otherwise?

I do.

Will you uphold the Word by teaching, advising, comforting and correcting, according to everyone's need; and protect the Scripture from false teachings?

I will, with the Lord's help.

Will you ask the Lord for help and with this church serve the sacraments according to His word; sharing responsibility for the spiritual growth of your church through love and discipline?

I will, with the Lord's help.

Will you give support to the work of Sunnybrook, using your God given talents to further its mission in our community and throughout the world?

I will, with the Lord's help.

Ordination (If not previously ordained by Sunnybrook)

The candidate will then kneel. The Presiding Officer will ask the members of the Board to come forward together with all previously ordained Elders and Pastors.

The Presiding Officer will say:

The Lord Jesus prayed on behalf of his disciples: *"Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you did send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth."* (John 17:11, 17-19).

Jesus, you have called us to share your Word, continue to grow in this person in faith, strengthen him/her in your Word and lead him/her that his/her life and works may bring glory to your name, bringing many into your kingdom. Amen.

The Presiding Officer will say to the candidate:

_____, by the authority given to his Church by Jesus Christ, we ordain you a minister of God's Word, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace. May God's grace be with you always. Amen.

Instruction to the Pastor

The person designated by the Board will deliver the charge. The charge which follows will be read, but an additional brief encouragement, may be made before it.

Beloved fellow servant in Christ, be attentive to the flock whom the Holy Spirit may give you to shepherd and teach, and to all those among whom you will labor. Love Christ, and feed his sheep. *“For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all—especially of those who believe. Command and teach those things. Set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them.”* (1 Timothy 4:10-15)

In the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ; and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen (1 Timothy 6:13-16).

Installation

The Presiding Officer or other designated person may address the congregation after which the Presiding Officer will say:

Statement by the Congregation

Will all that are here today at Sunnybrook stand and confirm this person whom God has called?

When the congregation stands, the person leading continues:

Do you promise to support this servant _____, to be your pastor and teacher? If so, please say: **We do.**

Congregational response: **We do.**

In the Lord’s name, we receive _____, and make this promise: To receive with humility and love the word of truth he/she teaches, and to accept with confidence and joy the teaching he/she gives in service to God. We promise our encouragement and prayers, our participation and to volunteer together to do the work of the Church. We promise to financially support and provide personal care and encouragement so that they can do their work joyfully and productively, as long as he/she continues to pastor this church.

The Lord bless you, may the Holy Spirit flow through you, that you can keep these promises in Christ’s name. Amen.

Announcement

The people and the candidate may be seated. The Presiding Officer shall then say:

In the name and by the authority of the Elders of Sunnybrook, I now acknowledge that the pastoral relationship between Pastor _____ and Sunnybrook is established and that Pastor _____ is properly installed as pastor and teacher of this church.

Prayer for Grace

Let's pray.

The prayer may be spoken by the whole congregation.

Father, we thank you for the work you give us to do within this Church, and for the calling to share the gospel all over the world. Strengthen _____, by your Spirit, for the ministry you have chosen and called them. Give him/her understanding, wisdom and courage, speak to him/her that he/she will eagerly share God's word. There will be many joys of ministry, we thank you for that. Be with him/her through the difficulties and trials that may also come along. We pray that he/she remains strong, always finding joy in your Word and the promises that you gave to your disciples, *"I am with you always, to the end of time."* Amen.

The newly ordained and installed pastor will say a few closing words.

PRAYER

Introduction

Prayer is intimate communication with our Heavenly Father. It enables believers to live out a fruitful and closely connected relationship with Jesus (John 15:5-8). We believe God's power is reflected in the lives of people who pray.

During His life on earth, Jesus' days were filled with leading, teaching, serving, and healing His followers. He rarely had time to Himself; crowds followed Jesus everywhere. Yet, He made time in prayer with His Heavenly Father a priority. *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* (Mark 1:35)

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1) Jesus encourages us to pray in an ongoing, persevering manner. The Bible records people praying in private and in corporate gatherings. Praying groups of people are integral to the building of God's Kingdom.

We believe God meets with us in a special way through prayer.

Through prayer, we speak to God directly anytime, anywhere, for any reason. We are confident when we approach Him He welcomes us and we receive His mercy and grace. Through prayer, we participate in His work in the world - both seen and unseen (Hebrews 4:16).

We are called to pray privately as well as in group settings.

We encourage individual times of solitude in prayer (Matthew 6:6-7) and provide opportunities for corporate prayer. We encourage prayer at every small group, neighborhood table, or other corporate gathering. At the campus there is a prayer room where people can spend time alone with God, pray for or receive prayer from others. One-on-one prayer with trained pastoral counselors is available - including anointing with oil when requested (James 5:14).

Sunnybrook prayer ministry teams support the body by praying for requests submitted by individuals and ministries. In addition, Sunnybrook's board regularly and intentionally gather prayer requests from Sunnybrook's staff and ministries - and pray for those needs.

We believe in intercessory prayer.

While all believers are called to pray, there are members of the body who God specifically calls to pray on behalf of others in response to His prompting. These members have the gift of intercession (Romans 8:26; John 17:9-26; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

People receiving encouragement from an intercessor should receive the words as sincere blessings from a flawed human being. It is important to not take another believer's words as God's final authority. God is not offended by our need for confirmation of encouragement from any source. He encourages us not to be easily swayed as we seek His guidance (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

We believe in and pray for physical, spiritual, and emotional healing.

Jesus showed that there was no power - spiritual, physical, demonic, or natural - that was not subject to Him. The vast majority of processes associated with growth, health, and healing by God's design are gradual. With this in mind, we are encouraged to keep praying, although immediate results may not be seen. We also believe God will, at times, graciously intervene and perform miracles. A lack of instant transformation does not represent a failure of faith or submission to our fallen nature, or failure on God's part to be gracious. God permits specific circumstances for a specific person.

We believe faith has an impact on answered prayer.

Believing and trusting in God's goodness, power and love is critical to a vibrant prayer life. Christians can be confident God hears and answers prayers. We partner with God as we pray. It is God who powerfully acts and we who humbly request that action (Matthew 21:21-22).

Our faith connects us to God so we want our faith to grow. Yet, it is God who does the work, not our faith. *"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."* (Hebrews 5:7) Small faith in a big God is enough; even faith the size of a "mustard seed" accesses His power (Luke 17:5-6).

We believe there are current prayer philosophies that are not biblical.

There are beliefs about prayer in some faith circles which we do not align or teach at Sunnybrook. These teachings include, but are not limited to:

- Health, wealth, and prosperity beliefs – the belief Christians are guaranteed physical and emotional healing, material possessions and financial wealth on earth because of their position as God's children or as a result of the proper exercise of faith.

- Prayer to saints or other religious individuals as a way to get help or influence God apart from Him, His Son, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit.
- Word of Faith Movement – the belief God is obligated to answer our prayers because we have faith and claim biblical promises or some mystical power.
- Teachings that create strata and layers of hierarchy – the belief some intercessors and prophets are more “spiritual” than others and carry biblical prophet status to be followed.

These theories can lead to abuses, harmful judgments of people who are sick, lack of compassion, an unhealthy reliance on certain individuals and their words or authority, or despair at a lack of results these teachings offer. *“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching....”* (Hebrews 13:9)

We believe spiritual warfare is real.

Spiritual forces work to prevent the growth and development of the Church and Christ’s followers (Ephesians 6:10-18). Scripture calls us to *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith....”* (1 Peter 5:8-9) There is mystery to spiritual warfare. While the Bible gives guidance, it does not offer prescriptive formulas espoused by false teachers. We are confident whatever the circumstance we pray for or the results we see, God has supreme authority. There are times God is ready and willing to work but minimal conditions have not yet been met. For example, in the book of James, it says we may not have what God is willing to give us because we have not bothered to ask.

James also writes we may not receive something because our motives are wrong (James 4:2-4). We don’t look for these “blockages” as if they are hiding or can be found only through some elaborate spiritual process. We know God wants them dealt with and anticipate His making them obvious, if they are not already. For people weighed down in spiritual defeat, we are to pray God brings His love, truth, strength, and hope into their situations. We are to remind people for whom we pray of biblical truths and promises. When Jesus was confronted with evil, He modeled and responded with the truth of God’s Word (Matthew 4:1-11).

We believe prayer will carry us into the future God has for us.

Our best days of ministry are still ahead. We are not interested in just maintaining God’s current work at Sunnybrook. We want to live vibrant, relevant, teachable, and power-filled lives with God. We seek to follow God daily and faithfully. We believe prayer is foundational as we move into the future. Our understanding about prayer is always adaptable as the Spirit informs and leads. We strive to be fearless without being foolish, risk-takers without being reckless, and careful biblical interpreters without wearing

theological blinders. We long for God to receive glory and honor for what He has done, and will do, through prayer.

PROTECTING MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Introduction

Sunnybrook has adopted a policy regarding Protecting Minors and Vulnerable Adults. The purpose in providing a set of detailed policies and procedures is to mandate that our church implement and maintain a program that enables church-wide ministries to carry out their missions, while safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults against emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse.

The board requires that all requisite forms, background checks, related policies and procedures, apply to all Sunnybrook ministries involving minors or vulnerable adults and be embedded as standard procedure prior to the commencement and implementation of any such ministry event or program. Furthermore, no volunteer or staff should be allowed to participate in a ministry role involving minors or vulnerable adults without first completing the required protection screening approved for their ministry and level of service. Church-wide, all ministries will utilize the same system for tracking information about volunteers, which is available through the Sunnybrook-supported database.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

Consistent with Psalm 82:3-4, which says, *“Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked,”* the Board’s original intent was to protect minors so that they can learn about God in a safe environment. This intent is now expanded to include vulnerable adults. The intent was also to provide safety to volunteers through guidelines and boundaries, which will help prevent false accusations and avoid situations where volunteers may knowingly or unknowingly be tempted to sin.

The Board also wants to protect the church. God calls all of us to be good stewards of our resources – both human and financial (1 Peter 4:10). An incident of abuse could jeopardize those resources. We want to use available resources to expand Sunnybrook ministries on many fronts. Our desire is to utilize our God-given resources to reach even more lost people and bring them into a loving relationship with Christ.

By mandating protection policies and procedures that safeguard minors and vulnerable adults, the Board is communicating the importance of safety for everyone in the church and its ministries and establishing permanent rules for compliance in this area. It is our

deepest desire that God's children of all ages freely learn about his wonderful love and enjoy protection from harm within our environment.

RECONCILIATION

Introduction

As followers of Jesus Christ, we believe Scripture teaches that reconciliation is restoring broken relationships, and the place where truth, mercy, justice, and peace (Psalm 85) are brought together. God's mission is to bring all people together for healing and reconciliation to Him and each other (Colossians 3:13-15). Peacemaking is our own journey with Jesus and others (Matthew 5:9). It is never finished (Romans 12:18).

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

In Psalm 85, the entire passage speaks to our reconciliation with God and each other. Matthew 5:9 says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."*

John 3:16-17 says, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

Romans 12:13-21 says, *"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'"*

Romans 12:18 says, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*

Luke 10:25-37 details the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Colossians 3:13-15 says, *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you are called to peace. And be thankful."*

Core Value #6 at Sunnybrook is that loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life. Therefore, the principles of Ephesians 4:15 guides our attempts to maintain harmony and unity in relationship: *"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ."*

STEWARDSHIP AND GIVING

Introduction

Generosity is an integral part of God's character, and we seek to reflect His generosity in every way, living open-handed as God pours out His blessings into our lives. *"Freely we have received, freely we give."* (Matthew 10:8)

However, culture today bombards us with the notion that more stuff and more money lead to happiness, fulfillment, status, value, and joy. But the Bible teaches a counter-cultural way of life. In fact, there are more than 2,400 verses in the Bible that teach something about money and contain a wealth of financial wisdom. The realization that we're simply stewards of all that God has given us frees us to accept God's grace and protects us from the dangers of money and the lure of more possessions.

What is stewardship? Stewardship is living each day recognizing that everything on earth and all that we have belongs to God. We carefully manage the time, talents, and resources He has put in our care with the understanding that it has been given to us to further His Kingdom. This includes carefully managing our household budgets and choosing a lifestyle that allows us to give freely, save for the future, avoid debt, and meet our financial obligations. This will provide us with a joyful sense of freedom from possessions.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

Then He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15)

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24).

"For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." (1 Timothy 6:10)

"Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?" (Luke 16:10-11)

"... And the borrower is slave to the lender." (Proverbs 22:7)

The Heart of the Matter: Giving with Joy

Our value and identity do not come from the accumulation of things, but from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We give out of a place of gratitude for all that Christ has done for us. Giving should be a joyful experience not based on obligation, but is the response of grateful hearts that give cheerfully and generously to a loving God. God does not need our money - He has the power to accomplish whatever He wants on His own. But He realizes that the love of money and possessions can have significant power over us, and therefore has provided giving as the mechanism we can use to maintain control over money so that it doesn't control us.

In the Old Testament, the standard was the tithe. God's people were required to contribute at least a tenth of their income to God's work. When considering the New Testament, examples of giving in the Bible range from 10% to 100%. Thus, the practice of tithing is a minimum guideline for Christian giving. God entrusts us to discern the portion necessary to provide for one's family with reasonable safeguards for the future versus the portion to give to further God's work through His church.

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

Remember this: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

Conclusion

As we strive to fully honor God with our time, talent, and resources, we should look diligently for opportunities to give and be open for God's promptings. We should never be complacent, but continuously thankful, prayerful, and cognizant of the fact that how we steward our resources is a key indicator of the condition of our hearts and spiritual health.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was

so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." (Acts 4:32-35)

WOMEN AND MEN IN COMMUNITY

Introduction

We believe the Bible teaches that God created men and women to equally bear His image (Genesis 1:27). God's intention was for them to share oneness and community (Genesis 2:23-24), even as the Godhead experiences oneness within the Trinity. Each had a direct relationship with God and they shared jointly the responsibilities of rearing children and having dominion over the created order (Genesis 1:26-28).

However, human oneness was shattered by the Fall. The struggle for power and the desire to *"rule over"* another is part of the result of human sin. Genesis 3:16 is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a prescription of God's ideal order.

However, God has acted in Christ to redeem the human race, and to offer to all people the opportunity to be part of the community of believers, His church. It is God's intention for his children to experience the oneness that exists between the Father and the Son (John 17:11; 20-23). This means that old divisions and hierarchies between genders are not to be tolerated in the church, where all are *"one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28)

In the formation of the church at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men alike, as had been predicted long before the coming of Christ (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:18). In the New Testament, women as well as men exercise prophetic and priestly functions (Acts 2: 17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Further, the Spirit bestows gifts on all members of the community of believers sovereignly, without giving anyone preferential treatment based on gender (Acts 2:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 11). Every believer is to offer their gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11). To prevent believers from exercising their spiritual gifts is to quench the work of the Spirit.

In all attempts to understand and put into practice appropriate relationships between genders in the body of Christ, our sole authority is the will of God as expressed in Scripture. A few isolated scriptural texts appear to restrict the full ministry freedom of women. The interpretation of those passages must take into account their relation to the broader teaching of Scripture and their specific contexts. We believe that, when the Bible is interpreted comprehensively, it teaches the full equality of men and women in status, giftedness, and opportunity for ministry.

Therefore, in our attempts to live together as a biblically functioning community, we are committed to the following values:

- To provide opportunity for ministry based on giftedness and character, without regard to gender.
- To pursue the kind of purity and loyalty in relationships between genders that led New Testament writers to describe them in terms of family: "brother and sisters."
- To use language that reflects the honor and value God desires for both genders and to encourage the use of translations of scripture that accurately portray God's will that His church be an inclusive community.
- To be intentional where appropriate in overcoming sexist elements of our culture and to offer encouragement to women and men in areas where their giftedness has been traditionally discouraged.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You are Welcome Here

No matter who you are, where you have been, or what you have done, you are welcome to worship God through Jesus Christ at Sunnybrook.

Because God is FOR us, we are FOR each other, FOR our community, and FOR our world. We seek to communicate that through our actions. We invite you to join us.

