

**2.3 Doctrinal Statement.** We are deeply convinced about and wholeheartedly committed to the following statement, which form the basis of all we do and hold to be true at the church.

- a) **The Bible, the Word of God.** We teach that only the 66 books of the Bible are verbally inspired by God, making Him their ultimate source in totality. Fallible human authors wrote each book from God who prepared them and oversaw every word. Because of this, the Bible is inerrant and infallible in the original manuscripts, the supreme authority as well as the sufficient guide in all matters of doctrine and conduct. The canon closed with the Book of Revelation; no writing or person has authority equivalent to or superseding the Bible, nor does the Bible receive its authority from any person, tradition, institution or experience. The Bible is propositional revelation, the mind of God adequately expressed with human language to the original authors using words and sentences, not subjective impressions or experiences. We practice the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and highlight expository preaching because we trust that with the illumination of the Holy Spirit we can arrive at the original author's intent in each passage, which is the correct interpretation. The Bible is not a collection of speculative beliefs; it is God's revelation of reality in words without which we cannot understand reality correctly. Because God is its primary author, in all areas that the Bible speaks it is true, in no way misleading or contradictory and should be believed and obeyed. There is no truth that is inconsistent with the Bible. We accept the historical record in the Bible as accurate. As a result, we reject all postmodern, reader response, *sensus plenior*, mystical, subjective, critical interpretations that do not rely on the above controls as expressions of unbelief and disloyalty to Christ. And, we reject the idea that truth and morality are relative, subjective or socially constructed. [Ps. 12:6, 19:7-9, 119:160; Jer. 26:2; Matt 4:4, 5:18, 24:35; John 10:35, 16:12-15, 17:17; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 2:7-13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Titus 1:2; 2 Pet 1:16-21; Jude 3; Rev 22:18-19].
- b) **The Trinity.** We teach that there is only one true and living God, who eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. Though the Son submits to the Father, and the Spirit submits to the Father and to the Son, each Person is equal in every divine perfection and each executes a distinct, but harmonious function in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. Each divine person equally deserves worship and obedience. [There is Only One God: Deut.. 4:35, 6:4; Isa 43:10, 44:6, 45:5-6; Mark 12:29; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5; The Trinity: Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 1:3-14, 2:18, 3:14-18; 1 Pet 1:2; The Father is God: 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 5:20; Phil 2:11; Jas 1:27; The Son is God: John 1:1-3, 5:18, 20:28; Acts 20:28; Col 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8-9; 2 Pet 1:1; The Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 3:17-18; The Three Persons are not the Same Person, but are Distinct Persons: Matt 3:16-17; John 1:1-2, 14:26, 15:26, 17:24; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 12:3-6; 1 John 2:1].
- c) **God The Father.** We teach that God the Father is the Lord of Heaven and earth, an eternal, infinite, unchanging, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, knowledge, wisdom, faithfulness, power, justice, patience, love and sole authority over all creation. He created all things out of nothing, visible and invisible, not because of any deficiency in Himself or incompleteness in His self-sufficiency, but for His own purpose and glory. He foreknows, ordains and controls all things, concerns Himself with and mercifully enters into the affairs of humanity, planned salvation, hears and answers prayer and adopts into His family all who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. While God the Father is spirit and without gender, we reject all gender-neutral language in regards to Him as well as the idea that masculine pronouns for Him are analogical or metaphorical. "Father" is how the First Person of the Trinity revealed Himself

in the Bible He inspired and it is how Jesus and the Apostles referred to Him. [Gen 1:1-31; Ex. 3:14, 6:3, 15:11, 34:6-7; Deut.. 32:4; 1 Sam 2:6-8, 1 Chr. 29:11; Job 42:2; Ps. 50:9-12, 89:11, 90:2, 100:5, 103:19, 104:24, 115:2-3, 135:5-6, 145:8-9; Isa 6:3, 41:21-23, 42:8-9, 43:7, 45:18-19, 46:9-10; Ezk. 18:4; Dan 4:35, 5:21; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:7; Hab. 1:13; Mal 3:6; Matt 5:48, 6:9, 11:25-27; John 1:12, 4:24, 5:17-18; Acts 17:24-25; Rom 2:4, 8:15, 9:15, 11:33-36, 16:27; 1 Cor 8:6, 10:13; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:3-6, 1:11; Phil 3:20-21; Col 1:16-17; 1 Tim 1:17; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 2:11; Heb 12:5-9, 13:5; Jas 1:13, 1:17, 4:13-16; 1 Pet 1:3, 1:15-16; 1 John 1:3, 4:8, 4:16; Rev 4:8].

- d) **God The Son, The Lord Jesus Christ.** We teach that the eternally divine Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, the visible image of God, through Whom God the Father created the world and currently upholds it, is not created or eternally subordinate to the Father ontologically, though He is satisfyingly subordinate to the Father relationally. He was prophetically predicted in the Old Testament, became truly human when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in a virgin named Mary and was born Jesus of Nazareth. His divine and human natures are now and forever united in His one Person, without mixture, confusion, division or separation. At no time during His stay on earth was Jesus anything other than truly Divine though He had all the limitations that come with being human, yet without sin or a sinful nature. We consider Him our final Prophet, Great High Priest and Sovereign King. His existence, virgin conception and birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings are true and historical, as are His substitutionary, atoning, once-for-all-time death, burial, physical resurrection, ascension into heaven, present building of and perpetual intercession for His church. He will return to reign as earth's King in the future. In light of all of this, belief in Him is the only way any person can or ever will be saved. [Gen 3:15, 49:10; Num 24:17; Deut. 18:15-18; 1 Chr.17:12-14; Ps. 2:6-12, 16:10, 22:1-18, 110:1-7, 118:22; Isa 7:14, 52:13-53:12; Dan 2:44-45, 9:24-25; Mic 5:2; Zch. 9:9, 12:10; Matt 1:23-25, 28:18-20; Mark 1:1, 10:45; Luke 1:26-35, 2:10-11; John 1:1-3, 1:29, 5:18-23, 8:58, 10:17-18, 10:30, 14:6-10; 17:3-5, 20:28; Acts 1:9-11, 2:22-24, 4:11-12, 13:33-35, 17:30-31, 20:28; Rom 5:6; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-17, 2:9; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Tim 2:5, 3:16; Titus 2:11-14; Heb 1:2-12, 2:14-18, 4:14-15, 7:23-28, 9:25-28, 10:14; 1 Pet 1:18-19, 2:22, 3:18; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 2:1-2, 5:11-13; Rev 1:5].
- e) **God The Holy Spirit.** We teach that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is personal, meaning He thinks, feels, desires, chooses and acts. He is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent and eternal. He created and preserves the world, was actively involved in Jesus' earthly life (e.g., His conception, empowering His ministry, at His Crucifixion and His Resurrection), was sent by the Father and the Son in fulfillment of the New Covenant as Jesus' comforting replacement, is the Divine Author and Interpreter of Scripture, convicts of sin, restrains evil, grants new life to the spiritually dead, places all believers into Christ and the one true church, convinces them to repent and believe, indwells them permanently, empowers biblical preaching, gives Christians access to God, leads them away from and empowers them for victory over sin, transforms them into the image of Jesus, produces godly character, prays for them, gifts them for ministry, seals and protects them until He raises them from the dead and in all things brings glory to Jesus. We teach that while God can certainly work miracles today, they were prominent only during certain periods in biblical history, being given to authenticate someone's ministry as truly speaking or working for God. The offices of apostle and prophet ended with the Apostle John. The 'gift' or ability to perform miracles was never intended to be the normal Christian life and no one is performing

miraculous gifts at will today (e.g., tongues / languages, prophecy, healing, etc.). Spiritual gifts are ministries given to every Christian for the purpose of blessing and edifying others. No specific ‘gift’ is evidence of salvation. No ‘word from the Lord,’ feeling or impression will ever contradict or supersede what the Spirit has already said in the Bible He authored. [Gen 1:2; Ex. 4:30-31, 7:17; Job 33:4; 1 Kgs 17:24; Ps. 33:6, 51:11, 104:30, 115:3, 139:7-10; Isa 6:9-10 (comp. to Acts 28:25-27) 32:14, 44:3, 61:1, 63:10-11; Ezk. 36:27, 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Matt 3:16, 12:28-32, 28:19; Luke 1:35, 7:15-16; John 3:2-8, 6:63, 10:38, 14:11, 14:16-17, 14:26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15; Acts 1:16, 2:22, 5:3-4, 10:38, 15:28, 28:25; Rom 1:4, 8:2-27; 1 Cor 2:10-11, 3:16, 6:11, 6:19, 12:4-13, 13:8-10; 2 Cor 3:17, 12:12, 13:14; Gal 5:16-18, 5:22-23; Eph 1:13-14, 2:18, 2:22, 4:7-12, 4:30, 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:6-8; Titus 3:5; Heb 9:14, 10:15-16; 1 Pet 1:10-11, 1:23-25; 2 Pet 1:21; 1 John 4:13].

- f) **Creation.** We teach a young earth, meaning the six days in Genesis 1 refer to days not ages, making creation thousands, not billions of years old. Genesis gives us a trustworthy paradigm for doing scientific research. There was no gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. We also teach a literal (not poetic or allegorical) interpretation of what is real history in Genesis 1-11, creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), the special creation of an historical Adam & Eve, an historical Noah and a worldwide flood. We are not convinced there is any evidence for species-to-species evolution.
- g) **Human Beings.** We teach Adam and Eve, the parents of the entire human race, were real people who were created in innocence, without sin, and with the capacity, desire, and mandate to glorify God in all things. All human beings, whether in the womb or out, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or level of health, are images of God and are, therefore, inherently valuable and worthy of respect and protection. All human beings begin to exist as individuals at the moment of conception. Thus, we strongly oppose abortion and euthanasia as well as all kinds of research and procedures that destroy unborn children. We teach that while the highest goal for humanity is still to glorify God, in Adam’s sin the whole human race fell, inherited the guilt of his sin and a sinful nature, becoming spiritually dead, enslaved to sin, and alienated from God so that all people are now sinners both by nature, inclination, choice, and action. We teach that humanity is guilty before God, completely infected by sin and incapable of saving himself from his depraved condition, leaving every human that has ever lived (except for Jesus) hopelessly lost and destined for God’s wrath for their sins. This understanding leads us to reject all concepts of universal salvation. We also teach that for those who are trusting in Jesus for their salvation, at the moment of physical death their souls go immediately to heaven and remain there in sinless, conscious bliss until their resurrection when their souls and bodies are reunited forever. For those who do not trust in Jesus for their salvation, at the moment of physical death their souls go to hell and remain there in conscious misery until their souls and bodies are reunited at their resurrection. At that time, they will be judged, found guilty, and cast into the Lake of Fire, eternally separated from God in conscious punishment. We reject all forms of reincarnation, purgatory, soul sleep, spirit prison, and annihilation as well as anyone remaining on earth in a different form or getting a second chance to be saved after death. [Gen 1:26-31, 2:15-3:20, 5:2, 6:5, 8:21, 9:6; 1 Kgs 8:46; 2 Chr. 6:36; Job 5:18-19; Ps. 14:1-3, 143:2; Prov 6:16-19; Eccl 7:20, 8:11; Isa 13:11, 43:7; Jer. 17:9; Ezk. 18:4; Dan 12:2; Matt 7:11, 10:31, 12:12, 25:41-46; John 3:19, 5:29, 6:39, 6:44, 6:65; Rom 1:18-32, 3:9-23, 5:10-21, 6:17, 6:20, 6:23, 7:18, 8:7-11; 1 Cor 2:14, 6:17-20, 11:7, 15:35-49; 2 Cor 4:3-4, 4:14, 5:8; Gal 3:22, Eph 2:1-3, 2:11-12, 4:17-18; Col 1:21, 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim 1:10, 2:26; Titus 3:3; Jas 2:10-11, 3:9; 1 John 1:8, 1:10; Rev 4:11, 20:4-6, 20:11-15].

- h) **Men and Women.** We teach that God's original and very good creation included making both men and women in His image. This makes both genders equal in value, dignity, and salvation and equally worthy of respect and protection. However, the two genders are not identical, but were created to complement each other in role and function both in the church and in the Christian home. In the church, this means only men should be elders as well as publicly and formally preach or teach to a mixed audience of adult men and women. In the Christian home, husbands have been given the responsibility of humble leadership and wives have been given the responsibility of willing, intelligent submission to that leadership, which includes never following their husbands into sin. Because these marriage roles reflect God's very good creative purpose, being ordained by Him before sin entered the world, living in accordance with them fosters relational peace, blessing and joy. This is why marriage can only legitimately exist between one man (having XY sex chromosomes) and one woman (have XX sex chromosomes) and that These ideas are God-ordained, not 'old fashioned' or based on the ever-changing whims of societal acceptability and ultimatums. [Gen 1:26-27, 2:18-24, 5:1-2, 9:6; 1 Cor 11:3, 14:34-37; 1 Tim 2:11-14, 3:1-2; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; Titus 1:6; Jas 3:9; 1 Pet 3:1-7].
- i) **Salvation.** We teach that salvation is completely a gift of God's grace given to all whom He chose to save before the creation of the world. Salvation includes all that God does in saving humans from the penalty, power and presence of sin and in restoring them to a right relationship with Him. Salvation can never be gained by human good works, but is a free gift given only to those who by regenerating grace repent of their sins and put their trust in Jesus Christ alone as Savior and Lord, His finished work on the Cross and His Resurrection. All who do so are united to Jesus forever, and therefore, are forgiven and saved from their sins, declared right with and reconciled to God, freed from slavery to sin and adopted into God's family so as to do His will and bring Him glory both now and forever. [Mark 1:15; John 3:16, 3:36, 6:44, 17:3, 20:31; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 10:43, 11:18-21, 13:48, 20:21, 26:20; Rom 1:16-17, 3:20-5:21, 9:15-16, 10:9-17; 1 Cor 1:27-30; 2 Cor 5:19-21, 7:10; Gal 2:16-21, 3:10-14, 4:4-5; Eph 1:3-14, 2:4-18; Phil 1:6, 3:8-9; Col 1:21-22; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 1:8-10; Titus 1:1, 2:11-14, 3:3-7; Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:2-5; 1 John 1:9, 4:9-10, 5:11-13].
- j) **Sanctification.** We teach that sanctification from sin has both positional and practical phases. Positional sanctification as a work of the Holy Spirit is complete and absolute (a synonym for salvation). Practical sanctification is a result of the continuing work of the Spirit using the Bible as the primary means for increasing holiness and growth into Christlikeness as Christians follow His leadership in their lives. While the Word and the Spirit assure one of practical sanctification, it always remains imperfect in this life. After a sinner is regenerated, there is some element of corruption left in every Christian, which is the source of the internal war between the flesh and the Spirit. In general, spiritual growth occurs as Christians grow in love for Jesus through the Gospel, follow the Spirit's leadership into holiness, feed on His Word and are in fellowship with other believers for encouragement and service. [John 17:17; Acts 20:32, 26:18; Rom 6:1-8:17, 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2, 1:30, 6:11; Gal 5:16-25; Eph 4:20-5:21, 5:26-27; Phil 2:12-13, 3:12-19; Col 2:6-7, 3:1-17; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb 2:11, 10:10, 13:12; 1 Pet 1:2, 2:11].
- k) **Preservation & Perseverance.** We teach that all who have ever been saved are kept by God's power and thus, their salvation is secure forever, meaning a truly saved person cannot ever lose his or her salvation, going from saved back to unsaved again. Saving faith in Christ is expressed by a fruitful, God-pleasing life that stays faithful to that commitment until death.

While the moral perfection of the Christian will never be completed in this life, this should never be used as an excuse for sinful living. God in His holiness does not tolerate persistent sin in His children. [Ps. 31:23, 66:8-9; John 6:37-40, 8:31-35, 10:28-29, 17:2, 17:11-12, 17:24; Rom 8:31-39; Eph 4:30; Phil 1:6; Col 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim 1:12, 4:7, 4:18; Titus 2:14, 3:8; Heb 3:6, 3:14, 7:25; Jas 2:14-26; 1 Pet 1:5, 1:23-24; 1 John 2:3-6, 2:15-19, 2:29-3:1, 3:4-10, 5:1-2, 5:11, 5:18; 2 John 2; Jude 1, 24].

- l) **The Church.** We teach the true Church, the Church Universal, is made up of every person who has ever been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, united to Christ, repented of his or her sins, and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation. Though there is one people of God, the Church is distinct from Israel. It began on the Day of Pentecost and will continue until its completion at the Rapture. Each local church, as an expression of the true Church, is made up of redeemed individuals who have joined together for worship, instruction, fellowship, service, and evangelism. Jesus is the Supreme Authority in the Church and He delegates that authority through His Word to qualified elders in each local church. Every church is independent in that it must remain free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that, therefore, Church and State must be kept separate as having different spheres of authority, roles, and functions, each fulfilling its duties best when both are free from dictation or patronage from the other [Matt 16:18, 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21, 30-31; Acts 1:8, 2:1-21, 38-47, 8:3, 9:31, 20:28; Rom 11:25-29; 1 Cor 3:9, 3:16-17, 10:31-32, 11:3, 12:12-28; Gal 6:16; Eph 1:22-23, 2:11-3:6, 3:10, 3:15, 4:7-16, 5:23-27; Col 1:18, 1:24, 1:28-29, 2:19; 1 Thess. 5:11-13; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 15; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 9:12, 13:7, 13:17; 1 Pet 2:9-10, 5:2-3; Rev 19:7-8, 21:9; Religious Liberty: Matt 22:21; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29; Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tim 2:1-3; 1 Pet 2:13-17].
- m) **Baptism and Communion.** We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ ordained only two rites or ordinances and committed them to each local church to be observed until He returns. First, baptism is the submersion of a believer in water in the name of the Triune God and is to be done after a person experiences salvation, not before and never to earn salvation. It is a public expression of one's union with Christ, a proclamation of one's lifelong commitment to Him and an identification with the Universal Church. We teach that Communion commemorates and proclaims Jesus' death and is to be done regularly until He returns. While the two elements represent His body and His blood, we also commune with the living Christ whenever we celebrate it together as a local church. [Baptism: Matt 28:19; Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39, 10:44-47; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 1:14-17; Col 2:12; Communion: Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:20-32].
- n) **Angels.** We teach that angels are created, personal beings, and therefore should not be worshiped. They worship God and carry out His purposes in the world. We teach that Satan, also known as the Devil, Abaddon, Apollyon, Belial, Lucifer, the Dragon, the Serpent, the Tempter, the Prince of this World, the Accuser of Believers, the Father of lies, and the Angel of the Bottomless Pit, is not equal with God, but is a created being and a fallen angel. He is not God's equal opposite, but is the enemy of both God and humanity, who took numerous angels with him when he rebelled and helped introduce sin to the human race. He and his demonic army, though they know their end, have been and continue to propagate deception, sin, and false religion until they are finally defeated and punished eternally in the Lake of Fire for their rebellion. [Gen 3:1-24; Num 22:22, 1 Kgs 19:5; Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7; Ps. 34:7, 91:11-12, 103:20-21, 104:4, 148:2-5; Neh. 9:6; Isa 6:2-3; Dan 8:16-17, 9:20-23, 10:11, 12:6-7; Matt

4:3-10, 13:39-42, 13:49-52, 18:10, 24:31, 25:41, 28:2; Mark 8:38; Luke 1:19, 2:13-14, 15:7, 16:22, 20:36; John 5:4, 8:44, 12:31; Acts 5:20, 7:53, 8:26, 10:5, 12:5-11, 27:23; 1 Cor 4:9; 2 Cor 4:4, 6:15, 11:3, 11:14; Eph 2:2, 3:9-10, 6:11-12; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:16, 2:18; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Tim 3:6, 3:16, 5:21; 2 Tim 2:26; Heb 1:6-7, 1:14, 2:2, 12:22; Jas 2:19, 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-9; 2 Pet 2:4; 1 John 3:8; Jude 6; Rev 1:1, 5:11-12, 7:11-12, 9:11, 12:4, 20:2, 10].

- o) **End Times.** We teach an imminent, physical, personal, visible, and future return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. We teach that the Rapture of the Church will take place before the 7year Tribulation period begins. Jesus will return to earth at the end of this 7-year period to defeat the enemies of a repentant Israel, literally fulfill God's covenants to them, and set up His peaceful, righteous, and worshipful Kingdom in Jerusalem on the Throne of David. He will reign as Earth's King for 1000 literal years, after which time Satan as well as both his spiritual and human followers will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. After that, this present creation will be destroyed and remade into a New Heavens and a New Earth. [Gen 12:1-3, 2 Sam 7:11-16; 1 Chr. 17:8-14; Isa 11:1-16, 65:17-25; Jer. 31:31-37; Ezk. 36:22-38; Dan 2:44, 9:24-27, 12:2; Zch. 8:1-17, 12:10, 13:9; Matt 5:12, 6:20, 13:40-42, 24:3-51, 25:41-46; Mark 13:32; Luke 10:20, 12:33; John 5:22-29, 14:2; Acts 1:9-11, 2:29-30, 10:42, 17:31; Rom 2:8-16, 6:16-23, 8:17, 8:30, 11:25-29, 13:12, 14:10; 1 Cor 3:10-4:5, 13:12, 15:24-28, 16:22; 2 Cor 5:6-10, 12:2-4; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Phil 1:21-23, 3:20-21, 4:5; 1 Thess. 1:9-10, 3:13, 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 2:7-14; 2 Tim 2:10, 4:1; Titus 2:13; Heb 6:2, 9:27, 11:16, 12:22-23; Jas 1:15, 5:7-9; 1 Pet 1:4, 4:5-7, 5:4; 2 Pet 2:17, 3:7-12; 1 John 3:2; Jude 6, 14-15, 23; Rev 1:7, 6:17, 7:16-17, 11:15, 14:11, 19:1-22:5].

# **POLICY STATEMENTS**

## **Statement on Marriage & Sexuality**

### **Assumptions**

The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe as interpreted by our pastor-elders. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God and the final authority concerning morality and conduct of mankind. In light of this, we teach that the term “marriage” has only one meaning, which is that marriage was created by God and only sanctioned to join one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-5). In general, God hates divorce (Mal 2:16), but we teach He allows it only in cases of adultery or desertion (Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 7:15).

### **Sexuality**

We teach God created sex as part of His good creation (Gen 2:24) and intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (Heb 13:4), meaning God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We love those caught in These sins and will always express that love by encouraging repentance (1 Cor 13:6) from any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, premarital fornication, polygamy, homosexual, bisexual or multi-sexual activity, bestiality, incest, pornography and any disagreement with or attempt to modify one’s biological gender. These and any other sexual activity outside of that between one man and one woman in marriage is sinful, an offense to God and risks eternal punishment (Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; 1 Tim 1:9-10).

### **Forgiveness**

We teach that God offers forgiveness, redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin in these matters (1 Cor 6:11; 1 Tim 1:11; Titus 2:14; 1 John 1:9), seeking His mercy through Jesus Christ. We teach that every person must be shown compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity; hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual or group are to be repudiated and are not in accord with the Scriptures nor the doctrines of this church (1 Cor 13:1-7, 16:14).

### **Integrity**

We teach that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Christians and non-Christians alike, it is imperative that the church operates exclusively according to our conscience and convictions on these matters, and that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, must conduct themselves in accordance with this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality.

## Statement on Church Leadership

### **The Leadership of Jesus Christ Pastor-Elders/Board of Directors**

- a) In accordance with the Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S) § 10-3801 (2015), corporate powers shall be exercised by or under the authority of and the affairs of the corporation shall be managed under the direction of the pastor-elders who shall also be known as “pastors,” “elders,” “overseers,” “board” or “board of directors” as that last term is used in the A.R.S.
- b) The elders are the governing board of the church. The overall leadership of the church shall be vested in the elders, who are to be men only (1 Co 11:33-36; 1 Tim. 2:11-14, 3:2; Titus 1:6) and are responsible for governing the church (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4-5, 5:17; Titus 1:7; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pt 5:2), proclaiming and defending the Bible (Eph 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2, 4:13, 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Titus 1:9) and shepherding the church (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Co 2:4; 1 Thess. 2:7-8; Jas 5:14; 1 Pt 5:2-3).
- c) All elders must adhere to the Statement of Faith in its entirety, maintain the scriptural qualifications as stated in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and be examples of the vision and mission statements as well as the church’s values.
- d) The elders shall be equal in authority, but may be specialized in function. Individual elders may or may not be employed by the church. Elders may choose the church officers, as necessary, which may include the Chief Executive Officer, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer from among themselves and determine their responsibilities. These officials must be elders, who may hold multiple offices and may look to other members to assist them in these duties.
- e) The board may select a male member in good standing to become a lay elder candidate who can attend elder meetings (without voting privileges) and start a process of training and observation that could culminate in becoming an elder. The board shall vote to retain current elders and elect new elders on a regular basis.
- f) An elder is free to take a sabbatical of up to one year at the discretion of the other elders and lay elders must take a one-year sabbatical after 6 consecutive years on the board. This should be a time of rest and study without the obligation of teaching and shepherding. Though this is a time of rest, the elder on sabbatical should remain a member in good standing and not forsake his own spiritual edification or supporting the flock with prayer.
- g) An individual elder, or the board may dissolve the relationship between an elder and the board. If the individual elder no longer works at or attends the church, or is in a state of unrepentant sin, or is under the formal process of church discipline or becomes unable to affirm the What We Teach Statement or fails to remain qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, then he will no longer be an elder.

## **Statement on Membership at Redeemer Bible Church**

### **Regular Membership**

There shall be members of the local congregation with word “member” being a spiritual and theological term that does not have any civil effect. Members will consist of men and women a) who have repented of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, b) who give evidence of being born again by living consistently with their commitment to Jesus and with the doctrine and practice of this church, c) who have completed the membership process as prescribed by the elders. People who are in AZ only part of the year can be a member of multiple churches as long as the other church is like-minded.

### **Membership Expectations**

A member in good standing is one who is currently keeping the church covenant.

### **Church Discipline**

Church discipline will be strictly exercised in accordance with this article. Ongoing sin in the life of a Christian obstructs one’s walk with the Lord, threatens the unity and fellowship of the church, weakens our witness and ultimately dishonors Jesus. God’s discipline in the church is primarily intended to be positive, instructive, and encouraging, never punitive or done in a harsh, vengeful, or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring the sinning individual to full fellowship with the Lord and the church (Mt 18:15-20, Gal 6:1), protecting others from the harms sin causes (1 Cor 5:6) and showing respect for the honor and glory of God’s name (1 Pt 2:12).

Redeemer Bible Church adheres to the following biblical procedures for confronting ongoing sin:

- a) Step 1. Church discipline starts on an individual level. If someone has firsthand knowledge of ongoing sin in the life of a fellow believer or member, he/she should promptly go to the individual and confront him/her in private, encouraging confession and repentance, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God and those he/she has sinned against (Matthew 18:15). At this point, only two people should know about this, the one in sin and the one with knowledge of the sin. At every step in this process, love would dictate that those with firsthand knowledge of the sin should tell no one else.
- b) Step 2. If there continues to be no repentance, the one with knowledge of the sin should confirm the facts of the situation with one or at most two more witnesses and then they should all go to the one in sin to encourage him/her further to confess and repent of their sin, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God and those he/she has sinned against (Matthew 18:16).
- c) Step 3. If there is still no repentance, the matter should be brought to “the church” (Mt 18:17a). This should be done by bringing the matter to a pastor-elder, who will attempt to confirm the facts of the situation with the other elders and those previously involved. The sinning individual will then be given the opportunity to respond to the accusation(s) and, if substantiated, the pastor-elders will again call on the one in sin to confess and repent. If the sinning individual is an elder, the accusation must be brought to the board by at least two individuals in order to be received (1 Tim. 5:19-20). If there is confession and repentance, the elders will oversee a process of restoration that is to be followed by the individual (2 Co 13:5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15;

Titus 3:10-11). If there is no confession and repentance, the sinning individual will be informed the matter will be brought before the church (Mt 18:17). There, the church will be encouraged to reach out to the sinning individual in truth and love (Eph 4:15) to win them back.

- d) Step 4. After a short but reasonable period of the whole church pursuing the sinning individual, if he/she has still not repented of their sin, he/she will be excluded from attendance at the church (Matt 18:17b, 1 Cor 5:3-11) and their membership will be terminated.

Any person who has been excluded from membership as a result of church discipline may, upon confession, repentance, and compliance with the process of restoration determined by the elders, be restored to full fellowship and ministry. It is essential that the entire process of church discipline be approached and carried out without gossip, in an attitude of love, concern, patience, and humility, and must be motivated by the sincere desire to see repentance and the restoration to fellowship of the sinning person (Matt 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Luke 17:3; Gal 6:1; Eph 4:32).

### **Termination of Membership**

Membership in this church may be removed from the roles in the following ways: a) by death, b) by church discipline, c) by inactivity – If the member has been inactive, through lack of attendance in the Church over a period of at least six months, membership may be terminated. An elder or staff person will make an attempt to contact the person and encourage them to reaffirm their commitment to this body. Should the member not respond, or in response indicate no desire to reaffirm their commitment, or reaffirm their commitment but continue to be inactive, their membership will be terminated – d) by removal – Membership in this church will be terminated upon verbal or written request of such member to any elder or staff person – e) by transfer – This church will issue letters of transfer upon the request of the church with which the member desires to unite.

## **Statement on Membership Necessary for Leaders**

Based upon our convictions regarding membership, we have the expectation that those who are in a leadership role at Redeemer Bible Church are official, covenant partners of the church, expressed in a specific commitment to this congregation.

This allows us to operate from a common foundation, bringing unity and clarity through which we can grow and be effective. If our leaders are not unified in mission, vision and values we will inevitably face unnecessary conflict, confusion, and frustration as we do the work of the ministry together. However, a common foundation allows for a diversity of gifts to flourish and for the church to function as a body with many unique members working in harmony.

### **Who is Considered a Leader?**

Not all leaders have titles. There are many individuals that shape our culture and influence lives at Redeemer Bible Church without formal recognition. What's more, God wants everyone to exhibit positive leadership at some point and in some context, whether in the home, at work, or in the church.

As it relates to this policy however, we are strictly concerned with those who are formally recognized by the pastors/elders of Redeemer Bible Church as leaders over specific aspects of ministry. This includes, but is not limited to individuals who:

- Lead Ministry Teams, Without Teaching
- Lead in Kids and Students, Without Teaching

### **Why is Formal Membership / Partnership Essential for Leadership Roles?**

- Leaders, above all, need to be committed to the mission, vision and values of the church. Membership provides a means by which the elders can assess whether potential leaders are committed and on the same page.
- Leaders need support. Requiring leaders to be partners empowers them to do their ministry knowing that they are legitimately representing the church's leadership and have the full support and affirmation of the elders.
- Leaders need accountability. Requiring leaders to be partners strengthens the church's ability to pursue discipline should a leader begin to stray from the faith. This should not be taken as a threat. Rather, it should bring comfort to those who desire the church to be faithful.
- The church's elders are tasked with the responsibility of shepherding the church body, overseeing the congregation, and protecting the church from error, false teaching, and division. Therefore, teaching functions are for members only. When a member desires a teaching position (in Kids, Students, Growth Group leader, elder, etc.), they must sign our Teacher's Covenant (the pastor-elder/director/leader over the ministry you would like to teach in can give this to you).

## **Statement on Counseling**

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives. Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God commands that he should seek assistance from other members, and especially from the elders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (Rom 15:14; Gal 6:1-2; Col 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16-4:2; Heb 10:24-25; 13:17; James 5:16).

Based on these Scriptural commands, this church encourages its members make confession to and seek counsel from each other and especially from our pastoral team. Each member agrees not to attempt to subpoena an elder or lay counselor in order to have that person divulge information learned through the counseling process.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction and is completely sufficient for faith and life. Therefore, our counseling shall be based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Neither the elders nor the lay counselors of this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

Although some members of the church work in professional fields outside the church, when serving as elders or lay counselors within the church they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services that they do when they are hired in their professional capacities. Therefore, members who have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. Our elders and lay counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisors and help members to consider their advice in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them as a sign of love and respect (Mt 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov 16:28, 26:20), invites confession (Prov 11:13, 28:13; Ja 5:16) and encourages people to seek needed counseling (Prov 20:19; Rom 15:14). Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of this church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others.

In particular, our elders shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines (see below). Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when the elders of this church believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- a) When a pastor-elder, staff, or lay counselor is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other elders in this church or, if the person attends another church, from the elders of that church (Prov 11:14, 13:10, 15:22, 19:20, 20:18; Matt 18:15-17).
- b) When the person who disclosed the information or any other person is in imminent danger of serious financial or bodily harm unless others intervene (Prov 24:11-12).

- c) When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to start the process of redemptive church discipline to promote repentance through accountability (Mt 18:15-20) or seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (e.g., Ro 13:1-5); or
- d) When leaders are mandated by law to report suspected abuse (Rom 13:1; 1 Pet 2:13-14).

Scripture commands that confidential information is to be shared with others only when a problem cannot be resolved through the efforts of a small group of people within the church (Matt 18:15-17). Therefore, except as provided in Article 7.5, an elder or lay counselor may not disclose confidential information to anyone outside this church without the approval of the elders or the consent of the person who originally disclosed the information. The elders may approve such disclosure only when it finds that all internal efforts to resolve a problem have been exhausted (e.g., 1 Cor 6:1-8) and the problem cannot be satisfactorily resolved without the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (e.g., Rom 13:1-5). This limitation shall apply to but is not limited to the giving of testimony in a court of law and the reporting of abuse. The elders may, but need not, provide counselees with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.

## **Statement on Leaving a Church Well**

The time may come when it is necessary for you to leave Redeemer to join another church. Because we value commitment and investment in the church, we believe strongly that the transition to a new church is a significant event. However, in our experience, few really do this well, which leads to hurt feelings, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, and a lack of unity in the body of Christ that dishonors Jesus.

We have compiled the five steps below in order to help you walk through this process well for the sake of your own health and the health of the Body of Christ.

### **1. Have a good reason for leaving.**

The reasons that people leave churches are many. Some are good, some are bad, and many are hard to discern. Before you go, evaluate whether your reasons are good, legitimate, and God-honoring. Ask yourself whether you are running from conflict or reacting to unrealistic expectations. If your reasons are good, go. If not, stay. If you are unsure, it would be wise to seek good counsel.

### **2. Communicate your decision to leave with the appropriate leaders.**

If you're an active part of the church, leaders will need to know you're leaving. If you are serving, communicate it to your ministry team leader. If you are connected to an elder or church leader, communicate your decision to them. Personal communication is preferable to written communication, but make sure you communicate. Whatever you do, don't just leave without telling your leaders

### **3. Tell the leaders the truth about why you're leaving.**

If you have legitimate reasons to leave then you have nothing to hide or worry about. If the reasons for leaving will sting church leadership, deliver it in the spirit of Proverbs 27:6, "*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*" God expects us to "*speak the truth in love*" (Eph 4:15), which means there's no need to couch the real, sometimes difficult, reasons behind vague, spiritualized generalities. God may use your specific reasons for leaving to help the church. "Exit Interviews" can be valuable to leadership, who are accountable to receive truth with humility.

### **4. Appropriately transition or conclude your ministry commitments.**

If you've been an active part of ministry, your role will need to be transitioned. Hopefully, you've been developing somebody to take your place. But if you haven't, give your leaders an appropriate time to find others to replace you. You don't want to just drop the ball on the people you've been committed to.

### **5. Leave graciously.**

Ray Pritchard writes, "[Leaving] graciously means you refuse to speak evil of those who remain in the church. Look forward, not backward. Focus on your new church, not your old one. Think carefully before you speak about your former congregation. Don't say anything that could be remotely construed as criticism. Even casual comments could stir up needless controversy. Let the Golden Rule guide all your comments public and private."

## **Conclusion**

If you've read this material and realize you didn't leave a church well in the past, you should make it right, apologizing not only to the leaders of that church but also to the people you may have harmed.

In the end, remember that Jesus loves the church you're leaving and the one you're going to — His blood was shed for both! Both churches are part of his bride. Do his bride the honor of leaving well.