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To: PCC Leadership

From: Board of Elders

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Major Doctrines, Doctrines with Scriptural Latitude, and Statements on Contemporary Cultural Issues

Introduction:

Evangelicals believe that there are certain controlling convictions, each of which is regarded as being true, of vital importance and grounded in Scripture. These controlling convictions “set us apart” from all other religions and religious groups that do not hold to these same convictions. These controlling convictions are referred to as “major doctrines”.

There are other convictions where a substantial degree of latitude and diversity may be accepted within the evangelical community due to Scripture being silent or offering a variety of approaches. These other convictions are referred to as “doctrines with Scriptural latitude”. Perhaps God allows different evangelical groups to come to different conclusions in order to (a) minister to those special sheep God grants them, and (b) to keep us humble (i.e., since we cannot build a monolithic church in which everyone agrees on everything, we must humbly acknowledge that our understanding is finite, not exhaustive; genuine believers will not always see things the way we do). Our stated position on any of these areas of Scriptural latitude will not prohibit us from partnering with other churches or ministries that do not share our position.

Finally, there are still other convictions laid out in this document which are referred to as “statements on contemporary cultural issues”. These statements identify specific truths, which, despite being clearly taught in Scripture, have become increasingly questioned, challenged, or abandoned in our contemporary culture. New statements will be added as needed.

In “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit”, PCC’s Board of Elders have devised an “officially held church position” on a number of doctrines which can be used to (a) screen leadership and teachers, and (b) provide for an official view of the church to be used by teachers, home group leaders, and in counseling. This paper is intended to supplement PCC’s constitution and other position papers and policies.

MAJOR DOCTRINES:

1. GOD (Article IV, Section A of Constitution)
 - a. Living God (Ps 97:7, 115:3)
 - b. One and only true God (Deut 6:4, IS 44:6-8, Mk 12:28-32)
 - c. One God eternally existing in three distinct persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Gen 1:1-2, Mt 28:19-20, Jn 1:1-2, Acts 5:3-4)

- d. Creator and sustainer of all things (Gen 1:1, John 1:3)
 - e. Rules over everything, Sovereign (Ez 12:28, Rev 17:14)
2. JESUS CHRIST (Article IV, Section C of Constitution)
 - a. Fully God, Deity (Jn 1:1-3, 10:30, 14:7-11, 17:11, Rom 1:1-4, Heb 2:14-18)
 - b. Fully man, virgin birth (Is 7:14, Mt 1:20-23, Lk 1:30-31, 34-35, 37, Jn 1:14)
 - c. Sinless (Jn 8:46a, 1 Pet 2:21-22)
 - d. Literally rose from the dead after three days, in a renewed, physical resurrected body (Rom 1:1-4, 1 Cor 15:12-24)
 - e. One and only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5-6)
 3. HOLY SPIRIT (Article IV, Section F of Constitution)
 - a. Personal being just as the Father and the Son are (1 Cor 2:10-11, Eph 4:30, 1 Cor 2:11)
 - b. Directs and enables evangelistic efforts, and regenerates people (Acts 1:8, Acts 8:26,29, Titus 3:5, Jn 3:3-7, 16)
 - c. Permanently indwells and seals (eternally secures) all believers (Rom 5:5, 8:9, 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19, Eph 1:13)
 - d. Causes the believer to grow in the likeness of Christ, filling the believer with power to live a godly life and bear witness to Jesus Christ (Eph 5:18)
 - e. Gives spiritual gifts to all believers (1 Cor 12:7-11)
 4. SCRIPTURE (Article IV, Section B of Constitution)
 - a. Inspired Word of the living God (2 Sam 23:2, Acts 28:25, 1 Cor 2:13, 2 Tim 3:16, Heb 3:7, 10:15, 16, 2 Pet 1:21)
 - b. Infallible/Inerrant, as originally given
 - c. Final authority for our faith and practice
 5. MAN (Article IV, Section D of Constitution)
 - a. Created in image of God (Is 59:2)
 - b. All have sinned against God (Is 64:6, Rom 3:10-12, 3:22b-23, 5:12, 8:7, Eph 4:18)
 - c. All need personal redemption from sin through the new birth
 6. SIN (Article IV, Section D of Constitution)
 - a. Sin separates us from God (Is 59:2)
 - b. God hates sin (Gen 6:5-7, Ps 5:4-6, Heb 12:28-29)
 - c. The penalty for sin is death (Rom 3:23)
 7. SALVATION (Article IV, Section E of Constitution)
 - a. God sent Jesus to save us from our sins by His death and resurrection (Rom 4:25, 5:8)
 - b. Salvation is available to all mankind (1 Tim 2:5-6)
 - c. Salvation is a free gift from God, not something we can earn (Rom 3:21-26)
 - d. Salvation is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. There is nothing man can do on his own to obtain salvation...no amount of good works, kindness, charity, etc is sufficient (Eph 2:8-9, Rom 3:27-28, 4:2-5, Heb 11:6)
 - e. To obtain salvation a person must be born again, "born spiritually" through the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:3-8)
 - f. Born again believers have been forgiven and have eternal life (Jn 3:16-18, 11:25-26a, Acts 3:19-20, 13:38-39)

- g. "Believing in Jesus" means that Jesus is God, not merely a messenger from God such as a prophet or an apostle (Jn 3:18, 14:6)
- h. "Believing in Jesus" means desiring the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life, not merely having an intellectual belief (Lk 6:46, Rom 1:9, Jas 1:22)
- 8. HELL (Article IV, Section E of Constitution)
 - a. There is a real, literal hell. It is a specific place with eternal fire. Those who are not saved will be imprisoned and punished there forever (Rev 19:20, 20:10, 20:14-15)
 - b. There is a literal devil and demons. They are angels who rebelled against God (Jn 10:7-10, 1 Peter 5:8, Rev 12:7-9)
- 9. RETURN OF CHRIST (Article IV, Section H of Constitution)
 - a. Jesus is going to come back and judge everyone who has ever lived. He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked (Dan 7:21-22, Jn 5:22-23, Jude 14-15, Rev 20:11-15)
- 10. BELIEVER'S POSITION (Article IV, Section G of Constitution)
 - a. A believer is no longer a child of wrath, but is literally born into God's family and given Christ's nature. A believer has changed nature, regeneration. (Jn 1:13, 3:1-8, 2 Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15, Eph 2:10, 4:24, Jas 1:18, 1 Pet 1:23, 1 Jn 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:4,18)
 - b. A believer is no longer a child of the world, but is given the position of an adult son in God's family. A believer has a changed position, adoption (Rom 8:14-17, Gal 4:1-7, Eph 1:15, 1 Jn 3:1)
 - c. A believer is no longer a sinner in God's sight because He imputes to the individual the righteousness of Jesus Christ. A believer has a changed standing, justification (Lk 18:14, Rom 3:24, 4:25, 1 Cor 6:11, Tit 3:7)
 - d. A believer is no longer defiled and unclean, but is now separated and holy unto God in Christ Jesus. A believer has a changed character, now and ongoing, sanctification (Acts 26:18, 1 Pet 1:2, Lv 11:44, 1 Thes 4:3, 5:23, 2 Cor 3:17)
 - e. A believer is no longer God's enemy, but now has peace with Him, and is His friend. A believer has a changed relationship, reconciliation

DOCTRINES WITH SCRIPTURAL LATITUDE:

- 1. BAPTISM (Article II, Section B, Para. 11 of Constitution)
 - a. Baptism is not essential for salvation
 - b. PCC will show tolerance toward an individual's mode of Baptism, not making this an issue for either fellowship or membership
 - c. PCC will practice believers baptism and immersion
- 2. CREATION ORDER
 - a. One's stance on the age of the earth is not something that is essential to salvation
 - b. PCC will tolerate both new and old earth views
- 3. CHARISMATIC GIFTS

- a. No gift mentioned in Scripture has necessarily ceased (1 Cor 14:39, 1 Thes 5:19-20)
 - b. Gifts are given as the Son deems necessary for the building up and outreach ministry of the Church (1 Cor 2:7, Eph 3:12)
 - c. Gifts are to be used for the edification of the Church (1 Tim 3:5, 1 Cor 14, 1 Thes 5:21-23, 1 Pet 4:10)
 - d. No gift should be used in such a way as to relegate Scripture to a secondary authority in the life of the Church (1 Cor 14:29, 1 Thes 5:21-22, Acts 20:32)
 - e. There is no distinct, normative, second blessing “second work of grace” or “baptism of the Holy Spirit” in which the Spirit for the first time fills and empowers the believer
 - f. Tongues are no more a gift for every believer than any other spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:30)
 - g. While PCC does not incorporate tongues and related utterances into official gatherings and public worship, it will try to create a climate of Christian fellowship and worship that will welcome both those who speak in tongues and those that do not
4. END TIMES (ESCHATOLOGY)
- a. The purpose of history, where it is headed (new heaven and a new earth, all to the glory of God, as He establishes His Son as head over everything) must not be disputed.
 - b. PCC will show tolerance toward views on timing and order of historical events.
5. PREDESTINATION/FREE WILL—While Scripture makes it clear that God predestines (Ephesians 1) there is mystery surrounding how He predestines and yet calls on men everywhere to make a personal response to the Gospel, to the general gospel call. While only those who have the specific call of God (like Lazarus coming out of the tomb) will be able to respond to the general call, all are held responsible for rejecting the general call. Such a position is the only one that can keep the “free will/sovereignty of God tensions” intact. We must deny either pole if we want to remain biblical.
6. CHURCH GOVERNMENT—PCC has adopted an elder rule form of government, because we believe it is the closest to the biblical model. However, other forms (e.g., congregational and/or bishop led) could be argued from Scripture.
7. WORSHIP—There is nothing more important in life than worship. We all worship something or someone. The question is whether we will worship the right One in ways that bring him glory. There are two different aspects of worship that are designed to complement each other. There is all-of-life worship and gathered worship. All-of-life worship includes everything we do as an act of worship to our God (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31). Gathered worship is what happens when God’s people meet together around his Word in the form of local churches for special set-apart times of devotion to God. At PCC, this primarily happens weekly on Sundays and occasionally on other days throughout the year. We want our gathered worship on Sunday to inspire and instruct our all-of-life worship Monday through Saturday. To gather regularly with God’s people around his authoritative Word and in celebration of Jesus’ resurrection is both a solemn

duty and a joyful privilege. The following is a brief summary of principles that guide our gathered worship and our all-of-life worship.

Gathered Worship

- a. Glory to God - Worship is ultimately for him. He is the most important audience at every service. Gathered worship is meant to be an anticipation of the heavenly gathering of God's people. The grand scenes of heavenly worship in Revelation are both present and future. We too should direct all our attention to the throne. We too should sing of Christ's work. We too should be earnest and uncompromising in our devotion to God. Our weekly gatherings—whether small or large, beautiful or forgettable—are meant to be a sweet foretaste of the heavenly worship we will one day experience for ages unending.
- b. Focused on the Gospel of Christ - The gospel—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection— is what makes worship possible. The gospel is what we proclaim in worship. The gospel is what we sing in worship. The gospel is what calls a people together in worship, inspires a people to praise in worship, and sends a people out in a life of worship. Every Sunday is another opportunity to sing about the cross, glory in our Redeemer, and marvel at the good news that is Christ for us and in us. Jesus Christ is at the center of all biblical thinking about worship. He is the mediator between God and man. His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross is the propitiation for our sins. He is the procurer of salvation and blessing for the nations. He is the new temple in which and around which all true believers gather. Christ draws us to himself in worship and through him a new relationship with the Father is made possible. While our gathered worship is not specifically focused on unbelievers (as if they were the audience we need to please most), our focus on Christ means that we certainly want the gospel presented credibly and intelligently to non-Christians. We are privileged to have new guests every Sunday, some of whom are not Christians. One of our prayers each week is that unbelievers would hear Christ's call to faith and repentance, and that God would seek and save those who are lost.
- c. Biblical - The whole service is centered around God's Word. Therefore, the prayers, the songs, and the preaching—must be biblical. In gathered worship we read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible, and see the Bible made visible in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Table. Every element in the service must be evaluated based on God's revelation in the Scriptures: are we singing, saying, and hearing what is true?
- d. Edifying to God's people - Gathered worship is set apart from all-of-life worship in its focus on edification. Because of this focus, there are many activities that are appropriate for the Christian in all of life that aren't appropriate in a worship service. There are many art forms that can be practiced and performed to the glory of God which would nevertheless not be suitable for gathered worship. Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 14 is that gathered worship must strive for maximum shared intelligibility.

- e. Emphasizing the ordinary means of grace - God can work in many ways, but he has committed to being with us and transforming us through certain “means of grace.” He communes with us through prayer, through the Word, and through the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Table. Our services emphasize these ordinary means whereby God promises to give us more grace. We come to worship to give God glory, but even more so to meet with him and receive a blessing from his hand (Num. 6:24-26). The central act in the worship service is the preaching of God’s Word. We believe this is best accomplished through the careful, Spirit-filled exposition of Scripture. No matter the approach, every sermon should flow manifestly from Scripture and proclaim the gospel of God. Through all this, we hope that every worshiper will want to cry out, “Surely the Lord is in this place” (Gen. 28:16).
- f. Congregational Singing – We believe that when we sing, our words can be directed both to God and to one another (Eph 5:17-20). We believe there are new songs to be sung to God (Ps 96:1). We also believe there is a great heritage of church music that we should embrace. Our services use music from different genres and different centuries presented in contemporary styles that encourage congregational singing. We use a variety of instruments, everything from guitars and drums to cellos and pianos. In all this, the most important sound is that of the congregation singing.
- g. Casual Liturgy – Almost every church has an order of service and a familiar pattern of doing things, which means almost every church has a liturgy. Even though we wear our liturgy lightly and adjust it as needed, we still want it to be rich and orderly. Our services include various elements including calls to worship, corporate singing, ministry reports, prayer, scripture readings, corporate confessions and assurances of pardon, collection of tithes and offerings, pastoral announcements, preaching of the Word and the participation in and observance of Baptism and the Lord’s Table. Our services do not look the same every week, but neither are we trying to invent something new every Sunday.
- h. Celebratory – The regular gathering of God’s people for worship should be joyful. With the cares of the world that individuals constantly face each week, the gathered worship of God’s people should be a time when we remind ourselves and one another that our Lord Jesus is risen, on His throne and is coming back to redeem and restore all things. This doesn’t mean that we ignore the tough realities that many are facing. Instead, our gathered worship helps us to find joy in our relationship with God so that we can proclaim, “blessed be the name of the Lord” in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.
- i. Prayerful - Our services include different prayers. Often the worship leader will lead a time of prayer focused on the content of one of the songs just sung. Other prayers are common too: a prayer of thanksgiving and supplication for the ministry focused on during the ministry report and for the tithes and offerings being given, a prayer of illumination before the sermon, and a brief prayer after the sermon. We also have times of prayer before our gathered worship as well

as times of prayer for the needs of our church body locally and globally on Sunday mornings and during the week.

- j. Undistracting Excellence – In gathered worship, the focus should be on the gospel and the all-surpassing glory of Jesus Christ. Because doing things decently and in order is helpful to others and pleasing to God, we should seek to “do worship” with excellence (1 Corinthians 14:40). But it must be undistracting excellence. The goal is to lead in such a way that we are neither so clumsy nor so clever that we draw attention away from the glory of God.

All-of-Life Worship

- a. Because the Christian life is not dualistic (separated into sacred and secular spheres), God is a part of all that we do. Therefore, we should treat our relationships, our work, our recreation, our daily mundane tasks and our every thought and deed as expressions of worship (1 Corinthians 10:31).
 - b. God created and enjoys the fine arts. Therefore we, too, should enjoy them and employ them in ministering the Gospel in our all-of-life worship (Isaiah 60; Colossians 1:16; Romans 11:36).
 - c. People should not violate their own consciences when experiencing art. If a person believes it would violate their conscience and therefore be sinful to experience a particular presentation, then they should not attend and not be forced to. Neither should a Christian participate in an artistic event in a way that will cause weaker Christians to stumble (Romans 14:21).
8. GENDER ROLES IN MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH— PCC is committed in belief and practice to a complementarian view of gender roles in marriage and in the church. The intention with the word “complementarian” is to locate our way of life between two kinds of error: on the one side would be the abuses of women under male domination, and on the other side would be the negation of gender differences where they have beautiful significance. Which means that, on the one hand, we as complementarians acknowledge and lament the history of abuses of women personally and systemically, and the present evils globally and locally in the exploitation and diminishing of women and girls. And, on the other hand, we lament the contemporary cultural impulse to minimize God-given differences between men and women and dismantle the order God has designed for the flourishing of our lives together. So, as complementarians we resist the impulses of a chauvinistic, dominating, and abusive culture, on the one side, and the impulses of a sex-blind, gender-leveling, unisex culture, on the other side. And we take our stand between these two ways of life not because the middle ground is a safe place (which it is emphatically not), but because we think this is the good plan of God in the Bible for men and women. “Very good,” as he said in Genesis 1. The Biblical principles of complementarianism and how they are practiced at PCC are detailed in the following:
- a. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
 - b. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

- c. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9). Eve was created to be a strong helper (*ezer*) for Adam (Gen 2:18). *Ezer* is used 21 times in the OT alone, 16 of which are descriptions of God himself (Ps 54:4, 118:7). God's role as *ezer* gives needed perspective. Since God is the ultimate example of what it means to be a strong helper (Heb 13:6), He demonstrates how it is a high and worthy calling.
- d. The complementary roles of men and women in both marriage and the church reflect the mystery of diversity within our Triune God. In marriage, both husbands and wives look to Jesus as their example. Husbands live out the role of Christ as the sacrificial and sanctifying head of the church (Eph. 5:25-33, 1 Cor. 11:3). Wives live out the role of Christ as submissive Son of the Father, submitting to the husband as the church submits to Christ, its head (Phil. 2:1-11, Eph. 5:22-24). Because God is the head of Christ (1 Cor. 11:3), headship does not indicate superiority; rather, the Father and the Son are equal and thus submission is voluntary. The voluntary, though commanded, nature of a woman's submission reflects the beauty of the Gospel, in which the ultimate act of Christ's submission even unto death on a cross (Phil 2:8) accomplished salvation for God's people. In the church, both men and women submit to one another and to the leadership of the church (Eph 5:21, Heb 13:7).
- e. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16). In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
- f. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
- g. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation (Gal 3:26-29) and an equal mandate to use all their gifts to build up the body of Christ (Acts 1:14, 1 Cor 14:12). We see various examples in the New Testament of women using their gifts to build up the body of Christ. Some of those examples include women engaging in evangelism (John 4:39), discipleship (Titus 2:3-5), teaching (Acts 18:24-26), prophesy (Acts 21:7-9, 1 Cor 11:5), praying and prophesying in the gathered worship service (1 Cor 11:5), and leadership (Rom

16:1-16). Therefore, both women, as well as men, are pursued and encouraged to exercise their gifts for the edification of the body of Christ under the leadership and eager oversight of the elders and pastors so that in all things Christ may be glorified. Nevertheless, some governing/teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (1 Cor 14:33-38, 1 Tim 2:11-12; 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9). At PCC, these include the roles of Pastor, Elder, and Home Group Leader due to the authoritative teaching that each role requires.

- h. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
 - i. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
 - j. Our complementarian beliefs and practices will not prohibit us from partnering with other churches and ministries that subscribe to other views.
9. MARRIAGE, DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE
- a. Marriage unites one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment to each other (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage provides for intimate companionship, pure sexual expression, procreation, and reflects the relationship of Christ and the church (Genesis 1:28, 2:25; Proverbs 5:15-19; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Ephesians 5:31-33).
 - b. A husband is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the church by giving himself up for her and a wife is commanded to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33).
 - c. Marriage is a common grace gift from God to all people regardless of their beliefs. Believers, however, are commanded not to be unevenly yoked. Therefore, believers should only marry fellow believers (2 Corinthians 6:14). However, if two non-believers marry and one spouse then comes to faith, that spouse should remain married to the non-believer (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).
 - d. Divorce is an official and public dissolution of the marriage covenant. God is greatly grieved when marriages end in divorce, however due to the hardness of our hearts, God has revealed in his word a limited number of circumstances when divorce is permissible (Malachi 2:13-16, Matthew 19:4-9; Romans 7:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39).
 - e. While there are cases when divorce is permitted, if godly reconciliation is possible, it should be pursued.
 - f. Divorce is permitted in the case of desertion by an unbeliever. This is when an unbeliever is unwilling to live with a believer within a Christian understanding of marriage.
 - i. Desertion by an unbeliever is not limited to a literal geographic desertion but could also include actions which endanger the life and wellbeing of the spouse and/or children. While the principle of desertion is clear, the

application of this principle can be difficult in some cases and requires the patient and humble counsel and investigation of the plurality of Elders to discern if desertion has occurred. It is our practice that this process will include male and female advocates to aid and counsel those individuals in dispute.

- g. Divorce is permitted in the case of adultery (Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9, Deuteronomy 24:1-4).
 - i. Adultery refers to sexual infidelity or a violation of the exclusive sexual intimacy that exists between a husband and wife in the marriage covenant. Again, while the principle of adultery is clear, the application of the principle can be difficult in some cases and requires the patient and humble counsel and investigation of the plurality of Elders to discern if adultery has occurred. It is our practice that this process will include male and female advocates to aid and counsel those individuals in dispute.
- h. Remarriage is permissible when:
 - i. A spouse dies (Romans 7:2-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39).
 - ii. A marriage ended because the former spouse was an unbeliever who deserted the believing spouse and would not agree to reconciliation (1 Corinthians 7:15).
 - iii. A marriage ended because the former spouse was guilty of adultery (Matthew 5:32, 19:9).
 - iv. If a marriage ended without Biblical grounds for divorce, but the former spouse has already remarried *and* the individual in question is repentant for their role in the divorce, then they may remarry.
- i. If none of the previously stated qualifications are met, then the divorced believer should remain unmarried and patiently pursue reconciliation until God provides reconciliation with the former spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11).
- j. While divorce is always a result of sin, the divorce itself is not always sin for both parties involved. Based on the two permissions, there are situations in which a person can be an innocent party in a divorce. This does not refer to an absolute innocence, but a relative innocence in the final point of dispute. Being an innocent party does not mean that one is innocent of all sin leading up to that point. For example, consider a man who commits adultery after his wife has intentionally been emotionally and physically distant. Though her sin is real, it does not excuse his marital unfaithfulness.
- k. Neither a divorce nor a divorce and remarriage should automatically disqualify a believer from positions of service or leadership in the life of the church. If the believer was an innocent party in their divorce or if they were the guilty party but have confessed and repented of their sin and sufficiently demonstrated fruit in keeping with repentance, then they should not be automatically restricted from using their gifts to serve in ways that will build up and edify the body of Christ.
- l. In all these matters, the believer is encouraged to cling to God's promises given to those who are repentant and are seeking to follow his will. They are

encouraged to seek the counsel of the Elders in how to live out their repentance with freedom and joy.

STATEMENTS ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL ISSUES:

1. SANCTITY AND DIGNITY OF ALL HUMAN LIFE

- a. All human life bears the very image of God, the Imago Dei (Gen 1:27), and is therefore sacred from conception until natural death.
- b. Inherent to the idea of loving your neighbor (Matt 22:36-40) is a robust understanding of the dignity of all human life. This includes not only the family next door, but also preborn children (Ps 139:13-16), disabled individuals (Lev 19:14, John 9:2-3, Matt 25:40) victims of trafficking (Is 58:6), those trapped in poverty (Ps 41:1), the immigrant and exile among us (Lev 19:33-34) as well as the elderly (Lev 19:32). Both physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia are prohibited by the sixth commandment (Exod 20:13) because human life is a gift from God and belongs to God.

2. SEXUALITY

- a. Heterosexuality is God's revealed will for humankind. A chaste and faithful expression of this orientation (whether in singleness or in marriage) is the ideal to which God calls all people. Sexual relations when between a man and a woman within the boundaries of marriage are good for both pleasure and procreation. (Gen 2:18-25, 1 Cor 7:1-7)
- b. Same-sex orientation is a result of the fall of humanity into a sinful condition that pervades every person. Whatever biological or familial roots of same-sex attraction may be discovered, we do not believe that these would sanction or excuse homosexual behavior, though they would deepen our compassion and patience for those who are struggling to be free from sexual temptations. (Rom 1:21-27, Jas 1:13-15)
- c. There is hope for the person with a same-sex orientation in that Jesus Christ offers a healing alternative in which the power of sin is broken and the person is freed to know and experience his or her true identity in Christ and in the fellowship of his Church. (1 Cor 6:9-11, 2 Cor 5:16-21)
- d. This freedom is attained through a process which includes recognizing homosexual behavior as sin, renouncing the practice of homosexual behavior, rediscovering healthy, non-erotic friendships with people of the same sex, embracing a moral sexual lifestyle, and in the age to come, rising from the dead with a new body free from every sinful impulse. This process parallels the similar process of sanctification needed in dealing with heterosexual temptations as well. We believe that this freedom comes through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit. (Col 3:1-5, 1 Thes 4:1-8, 1 Cor 6:9-11)
- e. All persons have been created in the image of God and should be accorded human dignity. Hateful, fearful, unconcerned harassment of persons with a same-sex orientation should be repudiated. We believe that respect for persons with a same-sex orientation involves honest, reasoned, nonviolent sharing of

facts concerning the immorality and liability of homosexual behavior. On the other hand, endorsing behavior which the Bible disapproves endangers persons and dishonors God. (Rom 14:19, Eph 4:29, Col 4:6, Gal 6:10, 1 Cor 10:32-33)

- f. Christian churches should reach out in love and truth to minister to people touched by same-sex attraction and orientation and we believe that those who contend Biblically against their own sexual temptation should be patiently assisted in their battle, not ostracized or disdained. However, the more prominent a leadership role or modeling role a person holds in a church, the higher will be the expectations for God's ideal of sexual obedience and wholeness. We affirm that both heterosexual and persons with same-sex attraction should find help in the church to engage in the Biblical battle against all improper sexual thoughts and behaviors. (Mark 2:17, Gal 6:1, Jas 3:1, 5:19-20, 1 Tim 3:1-13)

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