



SUNNYBROOK
community church

The Statements

of Sunnybrook Community Church
as approved by the Board of Directors

Updated as of September, 2017

**Seeking those who don't know Jesus,
Growing those who do,
Sending those who will.**

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 and Guidelines

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

About Sunnybrook Community Church

Also known as Sunnybrook or SCC, we've 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, 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. In 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 weekly classes, small groups and events that bring people together who are traveling the same path and open venues that welcome questions about Jesus and their journey with Him.

Our programs and support groups are designed to **SEND** those who will go out into 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 anointed teaching is the catalyst for transformation in individuals' lives and in the Church.

Romans 12:7; II 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 doctrinally pure.

I Corinthians 9:19-23

4. That Christ-followers should manifest authenticity 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 stewarding their spiritual gifts.

I Corinthians 12 & 14; Romans 12; Ephesians 4; Psalm 133:1

6. That loving relationships should permeate every aspect of church life.

I 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 normal for every believer.

I Kings 11:4; Philippians 2:1-11; II 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 personalities: 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 men 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 16:7-13, 14:16, 17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18

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 119:105,160, 12:6; 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; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2

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 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1

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; John 14:17; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-9

Governance

At Sunnybrook Community Church, we believe God has appointed people to lead His church. Our governance structure consists of a Board of Directors comprised of six or eight ordained Elders and the ordained Senior Pastor. Election of Elders who are gifted leaders is of prime importance. Sunnybrook Elders undergo a robust screening and interview process before they are eligible for election to the Board. Elders and Pastors will agree to and sign covenants as part of their ordination.

Elders at Sunnybrook 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 Senior Pastor, the Executive Administrator, and others appointed by the Board. Staff members are held accountable for fulfilling the Board's direction. This form of governance allows the Elders to focus their gifts and time on their biblical mandate to lead and shepherd 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, and we are grateful for their selfless service on our behalf. Please refer to the Bylaws of Sunnybrook Community Church 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 shepherded, that 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 Senior Pastor shepherd the church by being an example and role model.
- Care about the spiritual and physical wellbeing of members; pray regularly for the sick.
- Conduct the annual review of the Senior 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 Community Church 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, or 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 (3) 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; and James 1:5.

4. Teaching

The gift of teaching is the divine enablement to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, causing greater Christ-likeness in the lives of listeners.

Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28–29; Acts 18: 24–28; and 2 Timothy 2:2.

Elders have the right to preside over the administration of the sacraments, namely baptism and communion.

Our Senior Pastor

SEARCH PROCESS

The Senior 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 Senior Pastor position (Minister of Word and Sacrament), a Search committee will be formed by the Board of Directors (the Board) for the specific task. The Board will review the then 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, Mission, Core Values, and Statements of Sunnybrook Community Church (SCC).

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 SENIOR PASTOR

- Set as a guideline of personal behavior the standards required in *1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-4*.
- Be the primary leader of the vision and mission of Sunnybrook Church by vision casting and continually keeping the vision in front of the congregants and staff.
- 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.
- Lead Base One Membership Classes.
- Serve as the Chair of the Executive Team and the President of the Board of Elders.
- 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 pastoral care is happening and that staff is available for weddings, funerals, visitation, counseling, etc.
- Recognize the unwritten expectation that the senior pastor serves as the chief “fund-raiser” thus promoting the financial responsibilities of the congregation through involvement with fund-raising campaigns and appropriate messages from the pulpit. In general - whatever it takes to promote the mission and ministry of Sunnybrook.
- Proclaim God’s Word
- Declare forgiveness through Jesus Christ
- Call publicly on the name of the Lord on behalf of the whole congregation
- Celebrate Christ’s holy sacraments: baptizing and presiding at 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 SCC.
- Previous experience is desirable.

SPECIFIC DUTIES

The Senior 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

Shepherd the Flock

- 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 problem resolution
- Respond to letters/phone calls from the church body, staff, or public

Delegate to Ad Hoc qualified teams such as the following:

- Reconciliation Team—oversees processes leading to conflict resolution
- Elder Response Team—manages situations where people, particularly participating members, are experiencing significant relational difficulties or moral failure
- Anointing Team—anooints those who are sick with oil for healing purposes

Pray for the Sick

- Affirm the work of the Anointing Team

- In special circumstances, visit participating members who are sick (at home or in the hospital) for private counsel

**These statements address the following topics
and issues** (in alphabetical order):

Baptism

Communion

Discipline

Marriage

Ordination and Installation of Elders

Ordination and Installation of Pastor

Prayer

Protecting Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Reconciliation

Stewardship and Giving

Women and Men in Community

Baptism

Introduction

When people consider the topic of baptism, they often ask one of two questions. The first is a very basic one: What is the spiritual significance of baptism? The second has to do with traditions from the past, specifically pre-conversion baptism. The issue in that case is: Why be baptized as an adult believer if I was baptized as a baby?

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 in baptismal regeneration. The infant is usually baptized by "sprinkling", or the act of dropping water over the baby's forehead, baptizing the child 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 of all) and ours in response 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 hearkens 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).

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, following the example of Christ's immersion in the Jordan River.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

Scriptural teaching on baptism may be summarized as follows:

- Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who subject themselves to His sovereignty.
- Baptism symbolizes the spiritual cleansing through divine forgiveness and newness of life experienced by believers by virtue of their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.
- Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church.

Individuals participating in Believer Baptism need to understand this scriptural teaching. Thus, Believer Baptism is done at an age of understanding, typically age 12 or older.

Sunnybrook Community Church offers the options of baptism through both sprinkling and immersion, on the basis of a sacramental view of the ordinances whereby their value lies in the symbolism they convey and in the faith of the participants, rather than the nature or amount of the elements used (bread and wine for Communion, and water for Baptism).

Specific Passages Concerning Baptism

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

In Matthew 28:19 (NASB) 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). No one would dream of being baptized until they made a decision to identify with Christ. And no one else could make that decision for another person. The New Testament records the baptisms of adults who were believers, but never of infants. Baptism can’t give a person anything, spiritually speaking; It can only signify something that has already happened.

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. But 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.

Communion

Introduction

What is communion?

Communion, also known as the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, is Christ's gift to the church. On the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and shared it with his disciples. "This is my body that is for you," he said. "Do this in remembrance of me." He also took a cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." – Luke 22:19-20.

Following Jesus' example and instruction, when the church celebrates the Lord's Supper we receive gifts of bread and wine¹; we give thanks to God; we break the bread and pour the wine; 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, so 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 table we remember what God has done for us. The past event of our Lord's death, resurrection and ascension comes into 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 at the table and so we 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 that we need to examine ourselves before participating in communion. In light of Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, we need to be thoughtful and selfless. We need to make sure we recognize the body of the Lord in this meal compared to any other meal. In so doing, we can also participate in communion with grateful hearts for the incredibly generous grace of God through Christ.

¹ There is no biblical evidence on whether wine or juice is preferred or acceptable. Sunnybrook believes that either would be acceptable in certain situations.

Within Christianity, there is great diversity in the practice of communion. Some churches serve communion once a month, some do more or less frequently. The practice of the early church and the teaching of the Reformers of the 16th century was to celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly. We celebrate at least 6 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 the pew. At other times they may be invited to come forward to the 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 Community Church 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.

The Statements of Sunnybrook Community Church

Discipline

Introduction

Member discipline is addressed in the bylaws.

Discipline of Pastors and Leaders (includes the Elders on the board and such others as may be defined by the Board) is addressed here. All other staff are under the administration of the Executive Administrator.

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. How should we react to the disappointment, sadness, and anger we feel when a Leader or Pastor makes sinful choices that seemingly tear down the very things we are working so hard to build? How do we practically cope with the organizational disruption and the loss of that leader's personal and ministry credibility? What role does grace play and the knowledge that nothing, even our sinful choices, can separate us from the love of God and his redemptive power? How do we do our best to restore a fallen leader and still preserve the credibility of the entire ministry and the purity of the gospel message? How is trust restored?

The following is a summary of a study of scripture by the Board that takes 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. Since the first sin in the Garden of Eden, our propensity has been to hide from God and others in order to cover the shame and embarrassment of his sin. In spite of being new creatures in Christ, Christians still struggle with sin as a testament to our fall and need the sanctifying work of Christ in our lives. Paul expresses this struggle between our old and new nature in Romans 7:18 and 19 when he exclaims, *"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good but cannot carry it out."*

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). Through repentance, defined as a willful turning away from sin, we can

be reconciled to God through Christ and receive forgiveness from those we have offended (1 John 1:8-10, Ezekiel 18:30-32). We all experience this cycle of sanctification in our daily walk with Jesus Christ and continually require the operation of repentance, confession and the receipt of grace from God and others when we sin (Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 32:5 and Psalm 41:4).

But 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 appropriately specific public acknowledgement of the sin to defined circles of people who were directly impacted by the leadership or teaching of that leader or teacher. In 1 Timothy 5:20, Paul states that, *“Those [members of the Board of Directors/leaders] who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning.”* This practice of appropriate public disclosure serves to remind a ministry that godly character is the foundation for leadership and teaching. In addition, the holiness and credibility of the ministry is preserved and increased through the reminder of the consequences for violating biblical principles.

The consequence of failure to publicly acknowledge sin in a recognized Leader or Pastor is to allow rumors, gossip and false information to seriously erode the credibility of the ministry. Information and misinformation regarding the sin eventually surfaces that contradicts excuses or contains half-truths designed to “protect” the Leader or Pastor but is at the expense of the ministry.

In addition, sin is heartbreakingly hurtful to those third parties who are closely impacted by the sin but are innocent of any wrongdoing themselves. One of the most difficult decisions for the Board is how to obey scripture and protect the credibility of the ministry while offering love and compassion to those innocently hurt by sin. We have found that in most cases, despite our best efforts, there simply is no way to completely avoid or mitigate for everyone involved all of the pain that sin brings because sin, by its very nature, is destructive and hurtful to those in and around it. In this case, we have tried diligently in light of all the facts and circumstances, to protect and share the burden of those who are innocently hurt by sin.

Next, the Board has committed to “Tell the whole truth to whom the whole truth is due” (R.C. Sproul). Great care has been taken to determine with as much precision as possible exactly what is “the whole truth” and “to whom the whole truth is due” in order not to subject the ministry involved or any innocent third party undue and preventable embarrassment, gossip, or condemnation. We trust that the receivers of this information will be wise and confidential pursuant to the communication guidelines found in Ephesians 4:29-32 and Matthew 18:15 and resist the temptation to gossip or destructively criticize anyone involved. We believe disclosure of appropriate levels of

information to these circles upholds the biblical standards stated above, takes into consideration the level of leadership that was violated, protects as much as possible the interests of the innocent and preserves the credibility of the Sunnybrook ministry.

Finally, it is our hope that all impacted will humbly keep in mind their own propensity to sin, remember the words of Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:32, and make a willful choice to extend forgiveness and yet understand that the rebuilding of trust may take a longer period of time.

As Leaders and Pastors we must make every effort to avoid putting any obstacles to salvation in anyone's way so that no fault could be found in the ministry or in our leadership. In 2 Corinthians 6:1-10, Paul defends the credibility of his ministry by asserting that it was based on virtues such as purity, knowledge, holiness of spirit, genuine love, and truthful speech. We seek to advance the cause of Christ in the same way. Likewise, when a Leader or Pastor falls to sin we must seek 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.

This statement is instructional to those to whom the whole truth is due:

We ask that you pray for those involved, for the ministries where they served, and for Sunnybrook Community Church, as we seek to overcome these events and press on to the tasks ahead.

Marriage

Introduction

In this Statement we outline Sunnybrook Church'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 the Sunnybrook Church's beliefs 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 Community Church 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.

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. All elected Elders are installed. The use of this liturgy is not mandatory but reflects the general intent of the meaning of ordination and installation.

The presiding minister shall begin:

PRAYER

Let's pray.

God, we are thankful that you have promised, through your Son Jesus, to be with your Church to the end of time, give us grace and guidance by your Holy Spirit that we will have a mighty impact on your kingdom, bringing lost people to you that it may bring honor to your name. Amen.

EXPLANATION

Believers in Christ, you have selected from membership this person to serve as Elder in this church. There is no scriptural reason why they may not be installed to this office.

Jesus Christ in the head of his church, members have a variety of gifts. The reason for these gifts is that the entire church may acknowledge that he is Lord and to serve in his name. In order to serve, he gives everyone a spiritual gift. To the pastor he gives gifts for teaching of the Word and sacraments; to Elders he gives gifts of leadership and training. These two ministries are one in Christ, to be engaged as one in the church.

Scripture teaches us that the office of Elder are called with pastors to encourage spiritual growth among members and help them grow in Christ.

When people are chosen to carry out these offices of pastor and Elder, Christ's mission is faithfully carried out.

The pastor will recognize the people who have completed their term as Elders, thanking them for using their gifts to serve in the church.

PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONING

The pastor will say:

The congregation has chosen N_____ to fill these offices. I now ask you to serve as an Elder. Please stand.

When the Elders stand, the pastor continues:

In order to accept these responsibilities, please answer the following questions.

Do you acknowledge the promises you made when you declared your faith in Christ and became of a member of his Church?

I do.

Do you believe that you have been called to serve God's Church, and to be a faithful leader as an Elder?

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 carry out and encourage the spiritual growth of this church; equipping with the Word of God, serving the sacraments according to his word through love and care of the members?

I will, with the Lord's help.

Will you give support to the work of Sunnybrook Community Church, using your God given talents to further its mission in our community and agree to the church's teachings and discipline?

I will.

ORDINATION

If the person has not previously been ordained to the office of Elder, they should kneel before the pastor. Invite those that have been ordained to the office to join with the pastor by laying on of hands. When laying on of hands, the Pastor will say:

N _____, by the authority given to his Church by Jesus Christ, we ordain you as Elder, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER

The pastor will say a prayer for all of the Elders:

Let's pray.

Father, strengthen these people by your Spirit, guide them by your Word, and direct their lives and service that it will bring many into your kingdom and glory to your name. Amen

QUESTIONING OF THE CONGREGATION

The pastor will ask the Elders-elect to stand before the people and the congregation to stand. The pastor will say:

Do you promise to support this servant to be an Elder in this Church?

We do.

Will you respect them for the office they hold, promise to glorify Jesus in everything you do, faithfully listening to Jesus and these people who represent him?

We will.

The Lord bless you and increase his grace to ready you to keep your promises.

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The pastor will ask the Elders to face him.

In the name and by the authority of the Jesus, I now acknowledge that you are ordained and installed as Elder, entrusting you to the grace of God to fulfill your duties. May the Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face 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.

CHARGE

The congregation and new Elders may be seated. The pastor will speak to the new Elders and then the congregation saying:

Elders, I ask that you to be faithful in performing your duties, to increase the name of the Lord and to show love for his church.

Believers in Christ, welcome these persons as you would welcome Christ. Support them in love that their work will be useful, that together we can serve the Lord and understand the gifts he gives us. Let's pray together to gain whatever grace we need to fulfill our mission.

Let's pray.

Father, we look to you for help and guidance, give these servants the gifts that are necessary to this particular ministry.

Give them grace to serve you faithfully in this life and to look forward to the joy we all have in life eternal.

To the people they serve we also ask for grace, that all of us may share your Word, that our lives will give glory to your name, bringing many into your kingdom. Amen.

Ordination and Installation of Pastor

Introduction

Upon acceptance of a call as described in the Governance section, a Senior Pastor or Minister of Word and Sacrament will be ordained and installed by SCC. 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 Minister of the Word

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

The presiding officer of the Board shall 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 shall ask the candidate to stand before the congregation.

N _____, the Elders of Sunnybrook Community Church 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 shall invite the congregation to stand:

Please stand with N _____ 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 shall remain standing.

N _____,
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 Community Church, 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 Community Church)

The candidate shall then kneel. The presiding officer shall ask the members of the Board to come forward together with all previously ordained Elders and Pastors. The presiding officer shall 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 shall say to the candidate:

N _____, 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 will you always. Amen.

INSTRUCTION TO THE PASTOR

The person designated by the Board shall deliver the charge. The charge which follows shall be read, but an additional brief exhortation, 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 shall 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."

I 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.

I Timothy 6:13-16

INSTALLATION

The presiding officer or other designated person may address the congregation after which the presiding officer shall say:

STATEMENT BY THE CONGREGATION

Will all that are here today at Sunnybrook Community Church stand and confirm this person who God called?

When the congregation stands, the person leading continues:

Do you promise to support this servant N _____ to be your pastor and teacher? If so, please say "we do."

Congregational response: We do.

In the Lord's name, we receive N _____ 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 Community Church I now acknowledge that the pastoral relationship between Pastor _____ and Sunnybrook Community Church 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 N _____ 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. All Sunnybrook campuses have 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 at all campuses – 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 we do not endorse or promote at Sunnybrook. These philosophies 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.
- Philosophies 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 5:8-9a). 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 haven’t 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 (Matt. 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 Boards’ 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. Instead, 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 are 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 the Scriptures teach 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 were called to peace. And be thankful.”

Stewardship and Giving

Introduction

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 doesn't 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 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 God created men and women to equally bear His image (Gen. 1:27). God's intention was for them to share oneness and community (Gen. 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 (Gen.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 New Community, 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*" (Gal. 3:28).

To avoid any appearance of impropriety, SCC has adopted a Counseling Code of Conduct.

Biblical Basis and Guidelines

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 Cor. 11:4-5, 1 Peter 2:9-10). Further, the Spirit bestows gifts on all members of the New Community sovereignly, without giving anyone preferential treatment based on gender (Acts 2:1-21, 1 Cor. 12:7, 11). Every believer is to offer her or his gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ (Rom. 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 the Church

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. Spiritual gifts are not gender-based, but God assigned. All gifts are possible for anyone, regardless of gender.

In the Home

It appears that the consistent weight of the Genesis narratives of creation and the fall is on the mutuality and communal nature of the relationship between male and female that existed as they were first created. The disruption of this mutuality is expressed as the result of sin and not as God's original purpose for the human race.

Because of Christ's redemption, we can work toward restoration of relationships between women and men. Roles within relationships are not predetermined by gender, but are defined by the individuals themselves in the relationship, based on factors such as gifts, talents, expertise and experience. We believe, in Christ, marital relationships are grounded in reciprocal servanthood, mutual submission and sacrificial love.

Conclusion & Response

Mutual acceptance between men and women and teamwork on the basis of full equality are foundational to the biblical understanding of community as we practice it as Sunnybrook.

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

- To be intentional about developing and empowering both women and men, girls and boys, for all aspects of ministry based on giftedness and character, without regard to gender, and stressing each one's giftedness and calling.
- 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 pursue and encourage marital relationships of reciprocal servanthood, mutual submission and sacrificial love.
- To use sensitivity in all language, verbal and written, that reflect 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.
- To teach and model these values in the church and in the home to members of our community, to the church, and to the world at large.

The Statements of
Sunnybrook Community Church



Final Thoughts

You are welcome here

No matter who you are, where you've been, or what you've done, you are welcome to worship God through Jesus Christ at Sunnybrook Community Church. Please join us.

A Biblical Analysis of Marriage, Singleness and Sexual Practice

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. However, this discussion 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's 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's about putting sexuality in its proper perspective, not as an essential element of happiness or fulfillment, but as a wonderful privilege and responsibility that should never be abused or dishonored. And, it is about the very counter-cultural idea that followers of Jesus submit willingly to God's direction with regard to our sexual expression, aspiring to be faithful and obedient to Him 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 (Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:14-20; 1 Cor. 6:17; Rom 7:1-6; Eph. 5:21-33).¹ 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 Cor. 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

¹ The conclusions reached in this document are based on a broad and thematic interpretation of Scripture. Scripture citations are provided in places to help direct the reader to verses in the text where the information being presented is addressed.

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 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. And 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.

Having said all that, Leaders and Pastors roles are subjected to greater scrutiny.

At Sunnybrook, our hearts break for people challenged by and struggling with God's call to purity. None of us are without sin and we all struggle to live lives that measure up to God's standards. No matter your struggle, we honor your journey and welcome you to join us at Sunnybrook so that together we can seek to follow Christ. 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 each and every individual as an infinitely valuable person created in the image of God so that 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;"
- 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 while relating His truth with the same love and grace we have each received so undeserved.

Creation, Holiness and Sexuality

Our God is a holy God (Exod. 15:11; 1 Sam 2:2; Isa 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 (Lev. 11:45, 19:2; 1 Peter 1:13-16). We are to pursue holiness in all we do (Heb. 12:14; Eph. 4:24; 2 Cor. 7:1) and to keep ourselves from succumbing to the harmful practices that hold people captive (Gal. 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 (Gen 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 (Gen 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 (Gen 1:26). While Scripture notes our unity in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28) we do have unique gendered roles to play in God’s creation, i.e. 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 (Gen 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...” (Deut. 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 (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5-6; Eph. 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 Cor. 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 (Deut. 7:3; Josh 23:12; 1

Kings 11:2) and in the teachings of Paul concerning the complexities of mixed faith marriages (1 Cor. 7:12-16; 2 Cor. 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 (Gen. 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 (Matt 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 (Eph. 5:22-33). Paul taught that marriage is a covenant relationship and that covenants are irrevocable (Rom 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 (Mal 2:15-16; Matt 19:6). Therefore, those who enter into a marriage covenant should do so humbly, selflessly, and intentionally in the spirit and attitude of Christ (Phil 2:1-5).

God's design is that the marriage union be *exclusive*. The cleaving of husband to wife (Gen 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 Cor. 7:1-16, 25-40; Eph. 5:21-24; Col 3:18-25). The whole of Scripture makes clear that marriage is set apart by God to be respected, cherished, and protected (Heb. 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 (Gen. 2:22-24). Scripture makes clear that God created us man and woman (Gen 1:27) and that a man is to leave his parents (Gen 2:24) and unite or cleave to his wife in marriage (Gen. 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 (Matt 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 1-2). 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 (Rom. 1:24-28).²

² As already noted, Jesus expressly affirmed that marriage was between a man and a woman (Matt. 19:5-6; Mark

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 (Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31; Deut. 4:29; Col. 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 (Gen 1:28). Marriage also allows us to exercise joint stewardship over God's creation (Gen 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 Cor. 11:11), rather it is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Mal 2:14) and between each marriage partner and God (Prov. 2:17). The covenant of marriage mirrors both God's covenant love for Israel (Gen 17:7) and Christ's love of the Church (Eph. 5:32; Rev 19:7). Marriage also allows us to experience human intimacy in a sexual union (Gen 2:24). Scripture teaches that this sexual intimacy is a good and wholesome gift given by God that is meant to be enjoyed (Prov. 5:18-19; 1 Tim 4:3-5). The denial of the gift of sexual intimacy in marriage is not virtuous or noble (1 Cor. 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 Cor. 6:15-17) and having physical experiences that have consequences for our souls (1 Cor. 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 Cor. 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." (Phil 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—any more 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.

10:8-9). Although Jesus did not expressly address the question of same-sex sexual activity, he did not overturn any of the prohibitions on sexual practices set forth in the Old Testament. Further, the Jewish culture's unambiguous stance that sexual activity should be limited to a man and woman united in marriage made the need for Jesus to teach on same-sex sexual activity unnecessary. In contrast, the culture that Paul encountered necessitated that Paul explicitly address same-sex sexual activity in his teaching.

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 Cor. 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 (Matt 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 Cor. 13:4-7; Rom 12:9-13; Gal 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 (Lev 11:45). While our desire for intimacy is indeed acknowledged (1 Cor. 7:1-2), Scripture clearly reserves sexual expression for marriage and demands celibacy from our singleness (1 Cor. 6:12-20).

Our bodies are meant for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13; Rom 6:12-14) and as believers we steward our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 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 Thess. 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 Thess. 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; Deut. 5:18). Marriage was the proper domain for sex, and no other context for it received God's blessing.³ Scripture in many places also shows that adultery is damaging to everyone involved—harming even those not directly involved (Prov. 6:23-35; 7:6-27)—and that adultery brings with it God's judgment (Jer. 23:11-14; Ezek. 22:11; Mal 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 (Matt 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 Cor. 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 (Matt 19:6) and when marriages end in divorce it breaks God's heart (Mal 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 (Deut. 24:1). Jesus made clear that this was not God's original design for marriage (Matt 19:4-8).

Jesus restored God's original design for marriage thus revoking the divorce concession granted to Israel in the Old Testament (Matt 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 Cor. 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

³ At that time, adultery included sexual activity between a married woman and any man other than her husband. Adultery also included sexual activity between a married man and any other married or engaged woman. That it appears "legitimate" for a man to engage in sex with an unengaged woman (Exod. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29) is technically not so, for the man must make restitution to the woman's father and possibly also take her as his own wife. Sex outside of marriage for men or women is thus always morally "wrong", given the compensation due. As Jesus pointed out, some of the Old Testament law reflects God's concession to hard hearts—his mercy—more than the highest good for humans (Matt 19:8). But the whole of it upholds God's holy standard despite the few places it puts limits on rather than completely abolishes wrongdoing. (Regulations concerning slavery are similar. Because slavery is not God's ideal, laws about it are a temporary concession, regulating for a time rather than fully removing this inequity brought about by human fallenness.)

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 (or more) 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 (Matt 15:19; 1Cor 5:1, 6:12; 2Cor 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, however, in the context of the self-control and sacrifice and surrender that God asks of us, and indeed 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 (Rom 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 Cor. 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 Tim 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 Cor. 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 Cor. 10:13; Jas 1:12-15), that we are to avoid the appearance of sin (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Thess. 5:22), and that we are not to hinder each other’s obedience to and intimacy with Christ (Mark 9:42; Rom 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 (Mal 2:15; Matt 5:5-7; Rom 12:9-12; 1 Cor. 13; Gal 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 (Matt 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 marriage is designed to be a union between only one man and one woman. The Bible story 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 (e.g. Ezra 9-10, Isa 54:5-10, Ezek. 16, 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 (Ps 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 (Deut. 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 (Col 1:21; Rom 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 (Rom 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 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5; 2 Cor.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 (Rom 8:35-39). We at Sunnybrook Community Church 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, and choose to accept God's gift of divine rescue and restoration.