

## **CHRISTCHURCH COVENANT**

<sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. <sup>43</sup> Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup> and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

<sup>46</sup> So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

<sup>32</sup> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, <sup>35</sup> and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

Having been brought by the Holy Spirit to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:1-8, 6:44; Acts 11:18) according to the will of the Father, (Gal. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:5-6) and having been baptized in faith in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41), we do now joyfully and solemnly covenant together.

By the gracious aid of God (Gal. 3:3), we promise and commit:

To trust and obey the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21):

- We acknowledge its supreme, sufficient, and final authority (Acts 15:15, 28:23; Eph. 2:20).
- We agree to daily see, seek, and satisfy ourselves upon the beauties of God in the Person of Christ as revealed in His Word; to feast ourselves in the worshipful meditation, memorization, and application of God's Word. (1 Sam. 3:21; Ps. 1:2; 112:1; 119:16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 111, 143; Jer. 15:16)
- We agree to believe in all it teaches, obey all that it requires, and trust all that it promises.
- We agree to sit under the teaching of God's Word by this church.
- We confess and defend this Covenant, *The 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* and the *Supplemental Confession of Faith of ChristChurch Macy*

(2022) (hereinafter *Confessions*), and the Constitution of ChristChurch (Rom. 16:17; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 6:3-5):

- We acknowledge that the teachers of ChristChurch will continually call us to embrace the fullness of the *Confessions*, which is ChristChurch's understanding of the whole counsel of God.
- We agree that we will not to teach against the *Confessions*, distribute literature against it, campaign against it on social media, or otherwise to engage in undermining its teachings.
- We agree not to cause divisions or strife in the church about anything in the *Confessions*.
- We agree not be hardened in our opposition to anything in the *Confessions*, but have a teachable spirit, willing to sit under and learn from those who teach everything in the *Confessions*.
- Striving for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and peace (Eph. 3:18; Phil. 3:10).

To promote and protect the unity of the church by (Jn. 17:20-21; Phil. 2:1-2):

- Having the mind of Christ exhibited in humility, meekness, mildness, and gentleness towards one another by:

<sup>1</sup> Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup> fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 2:1-5)

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:22-26)

- Walking together in Christian love (Jn. 13:34; Eph. 5:2; 1 Jn. 4:7-8) by speaking in ways that are edifying by (2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:25, 29, 5:4):

<sup>5</sup> <sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

<sup>4</sup> <sup>25</sup> Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> "Be

angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, <sup>27</sup> nor give place to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary [edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 5:1-2, 4:25-32)

- Seeking reconciliation by humbly repenting and freely offering forgiveness because (Matt. 5:23, 6:12, 14-15, 18:15-35):

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails. (1 Cor. 13:4-8a)

- Serving and providing care for one another as members of one body in Christ (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4-7, 14:12; Gal. 6:10).
- Submitting to the leaders who have been granted authority by Christ through the church, recognizing that they must give an account (1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; Heb. 13:17).
- Working together in accordance with this Covenant, our Church Constitution, and the *Confessions* (Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 2:19-22).
- Watching over one another and receiving admonishment as occasion may require (1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:20; Titus 1:9; Heb. 3:13).
- Participating in and accepting the discipline of the church concerning doctrine and conduct (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Jn. 7-11).
- Refusing to sue each other before the unrighteous in civil tribunals because: (a) they should be willing to accept the wrong and be cheated, and (b) since even the lowliest saint will judge the sinners and angels at the second coming of Christ, then certainly all are able to peaceably discern the things pertaining to this life as well; therefore, if arbitration is unavoidable, saints are to bring the matter before a wise Christian man among them who is able to judge between his brethren. (1 Cor. 6:1-11)
- Abiding by ChristChurch's Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation.

To practice the Scriptural "one another's" (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25):

- Love one another (Jn. 13:34 and fifteen other places).
- Be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10).

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- Honor one another above yourselves (Rom. 12:10).
- Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16).
- Build up one another (Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11).
- Be likeminded towards one another (Rom. 15:5).
- Accept one another (Rom. 15:7).
- Admonish one another (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16).
- Greet one another (Rom. 16:16).
- Care for one another (1 Cor 12:25).
- Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
- Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
- Forgive one another (Eph. 4:2, 32; Col. 3:13).
- Be patient with one another (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13).
- Speak the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15, 25).
- Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32).
- Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19).
- Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5).
- Consider others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3).
- Look to the interests of one another (Phil. 2:4).
- Bear with one another (Col. 3:13).
- Teach one another (Col. 3:16).
- Comfort one another (1 Thess. 4:18).
- Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11).
- Exhort one another (Heb. 3:13).
- Stir up (provoke, stimulate) one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).
- Show hospitality to one another (1 Pet. 4:9).
- Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Pet. 4:10).
- Clothe ourselves with humility towards one another (1 Pet. 3:5).
- Pray for one another (James 5:16).
- Confess our faults to one another (James 5:16).
- Do not lie to one another (Col. 3:9).
- Stop passing judgment on one another (Rom. 14:13).
- Do not bite, devour, and destroy one another (Gal. 5:15).
- Do not be conceited, provoking and envying one another (Gal. 5:26).
- Do not slander (i.e., gossip) one another (James 4:11; see also Ex. 23:1; Lev. 19:16; Ps. 34:13; Prov. 10:18-19, 11:9, 13, 16:28, 19:8, 21, 20:19, 26:20; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Tim. 5:13-14; Titus 2:3; James 1:26).
- Do not grumble against one another (James 5:9).

### To take part in the edification of the church by (Eph. 4:15-16):

- We agree to give the church a sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin (Matt. 16:18-19, 18:17; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- We agree to fully and actively participate in the life of the church by energetically engaging in worship, fellowship and ministry, regularly and faithfully, unless providentially hindered; we agree to participate in every meeting and event of

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the church absent a rare and Scriptural reason (Acts 2:42; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25). The church, as the visible expression of the kingdom and family of God (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 2:19, 3:15; Heb. 3:1-6, is our greatest priority, to which all our (and our children's) secular activities take secondary importance (Matt. 6:33).

- We agree to give our time and money cheerfully, regularly, and sacrificially to the ministries of the church (Acts 2:44-45; 2 Cor. 8:1-15, 9:6-16).

- We agree that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and wordily recreations; by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private, and public; and by preparation for that rest that remains for the people of God.

- We agree to attend the stated business meetings of the church (Acts 2:42; Heb. 3:13, 10:24-25).

- We agree to serve the church using our Spirit gifts (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4-7).

- We agree to pray for the church as a whole and for its leaders and members specifically (1 Tim. 2:8; James 5:16; Jude 20-21).

- We agree to observe the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper that Christ has given to the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Lk. 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-34).

- We agree to serve as each other's social safety net, for by failing to do so they would deny the faith and become worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:4b, 8, 16; James 2:15-17). We therefore give to all according to their need so that no one among us lacks anything (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-35, 5:4). Such giving is proportional, so that a willing and voluntary gift is acceptable if given according to what one has rather than according to what he doesn't have (Acts 11:29; 2 Cor. 8:12).

- We agree to freely and joyfully practice hospitality towards one another and to strangers (Is. 58:7; Matt. 25:35-46; Lk. 14:12-14; Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 5:10; Titus 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:9).

- We agree to fulfill family obligations and commitments (Ex. 20:12; Matt. 5:31-32; Eph. 5:22-6:4; Col. 3:18-20).

- We agree to engage in family worship and private devotion (Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 24:15; Ps. 5:3, 119:147; Matt. 6:6, 14:23).

- We agree to raise those under our care in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 2:1-5; Eph. 6:4).

To perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord by (Matt. 5:48; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:15, 17; 1 Jn. 3:3):

<sup>3</sup> But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; <sup>4</sup> neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. <sup>5</sup> For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them.

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), <sup>10</sup> finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup> But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light....<sup>15</sup> See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, <sup>16</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:3-13, 15-17)

<sup>16</sup> I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:16, 19-21)

ChristChurch joyfully proclaims the good news that we may be delivered from sin to a new life in Christ. By the grace of God we Christians are “to put off the old self”—the old patterns of conduct as well as the old carnal mind—and are “to put on the new self”—a new and holy way of life as well as the mind of Christ (Ephesians 4:17–24).

In listing practices to be avoided we recognize that no catalog, however inclusive, can hope to encompass all forms of evil throughout the world. Therefore it is imperative that our people earnestly seek the aid of the Spirit in cultivating a sensitivity to evil that transcends the mere letter of the law; remembering the admonition: “Test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21–22).

We agree that “whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin.”

1. We agree to abstain from any and all forms of sexual immorality, including but not limited to premarital or extramarital relations, homosexual relations, transgenderism, pedophilia, incest, bestiality, masturbation, pornography, perversion in any forms, or looseness and impropriety of conduct (Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:27-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19; 1 Thess. 4:3-7).

2. We agree to abstain entertainments that are subversive of the Christian ethic (Romans 14:7–13; 1 Corinthians 10:31–33; Ephesians 5:1–18; Philippians 4:8–9; 1 Peter 1:13–17; 2 Peter 1:3–11). Our people, both as Christian individuals and in Christian family units, should govern themselves by three principles:

- One is the Christian stewardship of leisure time.

- A second principle is the recognition of the Christian obligation to apply the highest moral standards of Christian living. Because we are living in a day of great moral confusion in which we face the potential encroachment of the evils of the day into the sacred precincts of our homes through various avenues such as current literature, radio, television, personal computers, and the Internet, it is essential that the most rigid safeguards be observed to keep our homes from becoming secularized and worldly. However, we hold that entertainment that endorses and encourages holy living, that affirms scriptural values, and that supports the sacredness of the marriage vow and the exclusivity of the marriage covenant, should be affirmed and encouraged. We especially encourage our young people to use their gifts in media and the arts to influence positively this pervasive part of culture.

- The third principle is the obligation to witness against whatever trivializes or blasphemes God, as well as such social evils as violence, sensuality, pornography, profanity, and the occult, as portrayed by and through the commercial entertainment industry in its many forms and to endeavor to bring about the demise of enterprises known to be the purveyors of this kind of entertainment. This would include the avoidance of all types of entertainment ventures and media productions that produce, promote, or feature the violent, the sensual, the pornographic, the profane, or the occultic, or which feature or glamorize the world's philosophy of secularism, sensualism, and materialism and undermine God's standard of holiness of heart and life.

3. We agree to dress modestly and appropriately while in public. If your clothing is a frame for your face it's of God. If your clothing is a frame for your body it is sensual and God hates it.

4. We agree to abstain from all forms of dancing that detract from spiritual growth and break down proper moral inhibitions and reserve (Matt. 22:36-39; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:31-33; Phil. 1:9, 11; Col. 3:1-17).

5. We agree to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage, or trafficking therein; giving influence to, or voting for, the licensing of places for the sale of the same; using illicit drugs or trafficking therein; using of tobacco in any of its forms, or trafficking therein (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-24:2; Hosea 4:10-11; Habakkuk 2:5; Romans 13:8; 14:15-21; 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:9-12, 19-20; 10:31-33; Galatians 5:13-14, 21; Ephesians 5:18).

- In light of the Holy Scriptures and human experience concerning the ruinous consequences of the use of alcohol as a beverage, and in light of the findings of medical science regarding the detrimental effect of both alcohol and tobacco to the body and mind, as a community of faith committed to the pursuit of a holy life, our position and practice is abstinence rather than moderation. Holy Scripture teaches that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. With loving regard for ourselves and others, we call our people to total abstinence from all intoxicants.

- Furthermore, our Christian social responsibility calls us to use any legitimate and legal means to minimize the availability of both beverage alcohol and tobacco to others. The widespread incidence of alcohol abuse in our world demands that we embody a position that stands as a witness to others.

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5. We agree to abstain from the use of stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens and other intoxicants outside proper medical care and guidance. In light of medical evidence outlining the dangers of such substances, along with scriptural admonitions to remain in responsible control of mind and body, we choose to abstain from intoxicants, stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens outside proper medical care and guidance, regardless of the legality and availability of such substances. (Matthew 22:37–39; 27:34; Romans 12:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; 9:24–27)

6. We agree to abstain from habits or practices known to be destructive of physical and mental well-being (Prov. 20:1, 23:1-3; 1 Cor. 6:17-20; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:18).

7. We agree to abstain from lotteries and other forms of gambling (the exchange of money or goods by betting or wagering) as an unwise use of God-given resources and is not acceptable in any form (Matt. 6:24-34; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-11; Heb. 13:5-6; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

8. We agree to abstain from taking the name of God in vain (Ex. 20:8-11; Is. 58:13-14; Mk. 2:27-28; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10).

9. We agree to abstain from covetousness and materialism in all its forms (Matt. 6:19-34).

10. We agree to relinquish and abstain from all membership or association with oath-bound secret orders and societies as the quasi-religious nature of such organizations dilutes the Christian's commitment, and their secrecy contravenes the Christian's open witness (1 Cor. 1:16-31; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 5:11-16; James 4:1; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

### To be faithful kingdom witnesses by (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20):

- Seeking the salvation of others through the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

- Aiding the poor and oppressed (Matt. 6:19-34; Lk. 12:32-34, 16:1-13; James 1:27, 2:14-17, 5:1-6).

- Living with humility, justice, mercy, holiness, and peace in the world (Micah 6:8; 1 Thess. 4:1-12). Specifically, we agree to treat others, whether friend or enemy, as they themselves would like to be treated by an integrated, inseparable five-fold response: (a) showing mercy even as their Father is merciful; (b) forgiving those who have wronged them; (c) blessing and praying for those who have wronged them; (d) not repaying evil with evil but rather good; and (e) not using force to resist an evil person, for in so doing they will be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect and inherit an eternal weight of glory, because His steadfast love is better than life.

- To unite as soon as possible with another church of like faith and commitment to God's Word if we move from this place (Heb. 10:23-25).

Now to Him who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever (Jude 24-25). Amen.



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## **COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION**

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).*

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to himself through the sacrifice of His only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us His wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to trust God and seek His help in living out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

### *Personal Peacemaking*

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29-32). If we have a problem with others, we will talk to them, not about them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will seek reconciliation without delay (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15). Love may cover a multitude of grievances (1 Pet. 4:8), but confrontation and reconciliation becomes increasingly necessary when:
  - The sinfulness of the behavior is clear.
  - A pattern of such behavior emerges.
  - The behavior damages your relationship.
  - The behavior is harming themselves or others.
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).

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- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as he has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others' interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

### *Assisted Peacemaking*

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church shepherd-teachers, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- If we have a legal dispute with or within our church, we will only resolve it internally through the steps given above. If the matter persists, it will be mediated by the shepherd-elder board and, if necessary, it will be submitted to them as legally binding arbitration.

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### COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

*The prudent see danger and take refuge (Prov. 27:12a).*

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a place of safety and blessing for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen at ChristChurch, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children and youth from foreseeable harm.

If a child or youth is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also regularly review our policies, practices and procedures, to consider changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.

## **COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

*I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).*

Our goal in providing Biblical Counseling is that we may “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col.1:28). We believe that the Bible is God-inspired guidance, instruction and power for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling relies on Biblical teachings and principles applied with “all wisdom” through the Holy Spirit to each situation we counsel. We are committed to asking the question, “What does Scripture say regarding this matter?” and to counseling in the light of the response to this question.

We believe that Christ has equipped His body, the church, to provide wisdom, knowledge and instruction to one another (Rom.15:14) in order for each member to live a godly and holy life, pleasing God in all ways. Christ has also equipped His church with spiritually mature shepherd-teachers who are able to shepherd, lead, teach, and counsel others (Heb.5:11-14) in the church. Though the educational and experiential background of each shepherd-elder who counsels at ChristChurch is unique, the essential training and practice for all shepherd-teachers who counsel at ChristChurch centers around their ability to apply Scripture to the situation they are counseling. For this reason, those shepherd-elders who counsel for ChristChurch do not present themselves as psychotherapists nor mental health professionals but as Biblical counselors.

In order to avoid misunderstandings regarding the role of shepherd-teachers in the church that provide “spiritual counsel” these clarifications should be kept in mind.

1. Shepherd-elders who provide spiritual counsel may also be trained in other areas of life that are outside of the realm of providing spiritual counsel. Thus, if a doctor who is an shepherd-teacher provides “spiritual counsel” through the church, you need to understand that this is separate from his providing “medical counsel” at his clinic.

2. God calls the shepherd-elders in His church to set an example in “speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). If any shepherd-teacher should not live up to this standard in any counseling situation, the counselee needs to report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.

3. Confidentiality is an important factor in establishing a relationship to receive spiritual counsel. The shepherd-elder providing spiritual counsel shall keep confidentiality except in the following situations:

- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);

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- when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20);
- when shepherd-teachers are required by law to report suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

Providing spiritual counsel requires a relationship between the shepherd-teacher and the counselee. Occasionally there may arise a misunderstanding between the counselor and the counselee. We require our members to handle these misunderstandings in a Biblical way. This includes being willing to submit to internal church resolution rather than filing a lawsuit and also not attempting to require a “spiritual counselor” to appear in court or to provide his notes.

Our desire is to provide “wise, spiritual, godly counsel” to each person in our church. By sharing these guidelines, we hope the “Biblical counseling” offered at ChristChurch will help many become “mature in Christ”.