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CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I--NAME

This organization shall be known as the Trinity Fellowship Church of Rockwall.

ARTICLE II--PURPOSE

Trinity Fellowship Church exists to bring people into the family of God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ – helping them to grow in that faith, equipping them for the ministry they are called, encouraging them as they go out, and reach others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9-10

ARTICLE III--OBJECTIVES

In order to fulfill its purpose, the objectives of Trinity Fellowship Church are the following:

- A. Worship God
- B. Love People
- C. To train and equip leaders
- D. To promote community among God's people

ARTICLE IV--ARTICLES OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

A. ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. The Triune God

- a. We believe that the one and only true God is Spirit: self-existent, infinite, personal, unchangeable, and eternal in His being; perfect in holiness, love, justice, goodness, wisdom, and truth; omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; Creator and Sustainer of all things, visible and invisible; both immanent and transcendent to creation; eternally existent in three persons, one in substance and co-equal in power and glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Gen.1:1; Ex. 3:14, 34:6; Deut. 6:4, 32:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 90:2, 103:8, 116:5, 147:5; Isa. 6:3, 40:28, 57:15; Jer. 23:23-24; Mal. 3:6; Matt. 28:19; John 4:24, 14:16; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Col. 1:17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:2, 12 and 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 4:10-16

- b. We believe that the Father is begotten of none. He is the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of salvation, the Father of all who are begotten into newness of life through faith in Christ.

Gen. 1:1; Ps. 90:2; John 13:3, 16:28; Eph. 1:3-4; 1 Pet. 1:2-3; 1 John 2:23, 3:1

- c. We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; in His eternal generation from the Father; in His incarnation by which He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, thus uniting the divine and human natures in their completeness into the one unique person of Jesus Christ; in His sinless life and miraculous works; in His vicarious death to make atonement for the sins of the world; in His bodily resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father; in His sovereign power and Lordship; in His present mediatorial ministry as the believer's Advocate; in His imminent coming in power and glory.

Isa. 53:6; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 1:35; John 1:1,14,18; Acts 2:22, 24-32; Rom. 1:3-4, 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; Eph. 1:19-22; Col. 3:4; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8, 4:15, 7:25; 1 Pet. 1:18, 2:22 and 24, 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2

- d. We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, sent by the Father in the name of the Son, is one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternally God. His office and work is to reprove or convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; to regenerate such as repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; to sanctify, and endue with power, teach, guide, and comfort the believer.

The Scriptures reveal the work of the Holy Spirit in the church to be that of uniting believers into the body of Christ, possessing it as the temple of God, equipping it with gifts and graces for service, giving it the body of inspired truth and imparting to it the spirit of illumination and guidance into all truth, and presiding over and guiding the church into the will of God.

Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:49; John 3:5-6, 14:16-18 and 26, 15:26, 16:7-14; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4, 13:2-4, 15:28; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:10-12, 6:19-20, 12:4-11, 12:13; 2 Cor. 6:16, 13:14; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 2:21-22; 2 Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:2, 1 John 2:20-27

2. The Bible

We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God given by divine inspiration and is inerrant in the original manuscripts. The Bible today remains the unchanging authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. It is true and reliable in all matters. (See Position Paper IX: "Biblical Inerrancy.")

Ps. 119:9, 89, 105; Matt. 24:35; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:21

3 Man

- a. His Creation. We believe that man was created by an immediate act of God and not by a process of evolution. He was created in the image and likeness of God, possessing personality and holiness; in his original state man enjoyed sweet fellowship with God, the purpose of his creation being that he might glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Man having been created in the likeness of God is a self-conscious personality capable of free and rational choice.

Gen. 1:27; Eph. 1:5-6

- b. His Fall. We believe that our first parents did not remain in the happy state of their original creation, but, being deluded through the subtlety of Satan, voluntarily disobeyed the positive command of God, and thus were alienated from God and incurred upon themselves and their posterity the sentence of death both physical and spiritual. Even the earth was cursed because of man's sin. In consequence of this act of disobedience, the entire human race has become so corrupted that in every heart there is by nature that evil disposition which eventually leads to responsible acts of sin and to just condemnation. Also through the fall of Adam, man has become so completely ruined that he does not possess the power to turn to God and if left to himself would remain in his sin forever.

Gen. 3:13, 16-17; Isa. 64:6; Rom. 7:7; 1 John 1:8

- c. His Redemption. We believe that God has provided redemption for all men through the mediatorial work of Christ, who voluntarily offered Himself on Calvary as a perfect sacrifice for sin, the just suffering for the unjust, bearing sin's curse and tasting death for every man.

John 10:17-18; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 1:15, 2:5-6; Tit. 2:11-12; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:18

4. Salvation

We believe since all men are sinners and guilty before God and are dead in trespasses and sin and therefore are unable to save themselves, God has out of His infinite love given His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become man's Savior.

Matt. 1:21; John 3:14-17, 16:44; Rom. 3:10-12, 19, 20, 23; Eph. 2:1-3, 8-9

- a. Repentance. We believe that genuine repentance is a necessary attitude and act of man that makes it possible for a holy and just God to forgive man's sins. As an attitude it involves a knowledge of, a change of mind toward, and a Godly sorrow for sin; a proper reverence for God's holiness; and a surrender to God. As an act it means confessing and forsaking sin.

Repentance is man's appropriate response to the grace of God in conviction. As a fruit of repentance, whenever possible, where sin has been committed against man, restitution should be made.

Ps. 51:3-4; Prov. 28:13; Isa. 6:1-5, 55:6-7; Matt. 3:2 and 8, 4:17; Luke 13:3, 15:18, 18:13, 19:8; John 16:8-11; Acts 11:18; Rom. 2:4, 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:25

- b. Faith. We believe faith must accompany repentance and is the act of the will whereby man embraces the promises of God and appropriates to himself personally the provisions of God's grace. It is resting in the completeness and adequacy of the atoning merit of Christ's sacrifice as the sole ground and hope of salvation. Faith must be active throughout the life of the believer and must manifest itself in obedience and good works.

Acts 13:38-39, 16:31; Rom. 4:3, 5:1; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 11:6; James 2:17

- c. Justification and Regeneration. We believe that when the requirements of repentance and faith have been met, God justifies and regenerates the sinner. *Justification* is a judicial act absolving from guilt and punishment and restoring to divine favor. Justification has to do with the changing of the sinner's standing before God. *Regeneration* has to do with the changing of the sinner's nature through the impartation of divine life. Regeneration is a spiritual quickening, a new birth. This experience is witnessed to by the indwelling Holy Spirit who produces in the heart a desire to do the will of God.

John 3:3 and 5, 5:24; Acts 22:10; Rom. 5:1 and 9, 4:4-5, 8:16 and 33; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1; 2 Pet. 1:4

- d. Sanctification and Filling with the Holy Spirit. We believe that sanctification is the work of God in making men holy. It is the will of God. It is provided in the atonement, and is experienced through faith by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word and the blood. While the divine work of making men holy begins in repentance and regeneration, yet through a subsequent crisis experience the believer is to die to self, to be purified in heart, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that he may be separated, wholly unto God, to serve Him in righteousness and holiness. After the crisis experience, the believer is to be perfected in holiness in the fear of God and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ps. 4:3; John 17:17; Acts 15:8-9; Rom. 6:19 and 22, 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 2:20, 6:14; Eph. 5:26; Col. 3:3, 1 Thess. 4:3, 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:2 and 15-16; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 5:6

- e. Resurrection and Glorification. We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, and that because He lives we too shall live. The Scriptures teach that at the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised and the living believers with them shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and will be changed so that both will have literal, spiritual, and immortal bodies like unto Christ's own glorious body. Our glorification is God's final act in our salvation and will be realized when we see Him as He is.

1 Cor. 15:3-8 and 19-23; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:14-17; 1 John 3:2

5. The Church

- a. We believe that the local church is an organization composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have been called out from the world, separated from sin, and vitally united by faith to Christ, its living Head and sovereign Lord.

1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15-16; Col. 1:18; Heb. 12:23

- b. We believe that the local church is an organized body of believers in Christ who are voluntarily joined together, and who meet at regular times for teaching in the Word, corporate worship, the fellowship of the saints, observance of the ordinances, administration of discipline, exercise in prayer, and evangelism.

Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 2:42, 46, 47 and 20:7; 1 Cor. 5:1-4, 16:2

- c. We believe the characteristic marks of the members of the true church are faith in Jesus as the Son of God, love for God and for one another, obedience to God's commandments, and victory over the world.

1 John 3:14, 4:2, 5:1-5, John 13:35, Luke 10:25-28

- d. We believe the primary duties of the church consist of glorifying God and exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, building itself up in the most holy faith, and preaching the Gospel in all the world as a witness to all men.

Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8, 20:32; Eph. 1:5-6, 3:21, 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 4:11; Jude 20-21

6. The Last Things

- a. The Return of Christ. We believe that the second advent of Christ is the hope of the church and will be personal, bodily, visible, premillennial, and redemptive. It is the source of encouragement and consolation, the motive for purification and holiness, and the inspiration for activity and service. Christ will first descend into the clouds, where His church, the waiting bride, will be caught up to meet Him. After the tribulation judgments, which will be poured out upon the earth, He will return with His church to judge the nations and to establish His kingdom wherein He will rule upon the earth for a thousand years.

Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:34-37; Luke 1:32-33, 21:34-36; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; Rom. 8:16-19, 23, 24; 1 Thess. 3:12-13, 4:16-18, 5:11; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; 1 Tim. 6:12-14; Tit. 2:12-13; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28, 3:3; Jude 14; Rev. 3:10, 5:9-10; 19:7-8 and 14, 20:4-6

- b. The Millennium. We believe the millennium or thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth will be ushered in by His return with the saints. During this period Satan will be bound, the curse will be lifted, such evils as war, poverty, and injustice shall vanish from the earth, and Christ will reign in righteousness.

Ps. 46:8-9, Ps. 72:8, 10-11, 17; Isa. 2:1-4, 11:6-9; Rev. 20:1-6

- c. The Judgments. We believe the believer was judged as a sinner at the cross of Christ and is passed out of death into life. As a child in the family of God, he is being judged and chastened during his lifetime, and as a servant his works will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ at the time of His return. At the time of His return to set up His kingdom, the nations on earth will be judged and His people Israel restored. The impenitent wicked will appear before God for judgment at the great white throne immediately after the millennium, and they will suffer eternally in the lake of fire together with Satan and his angels.

Ps. 96:13; Eccl. 12:14; Dan. 7:10; Joel 3:1-2; Zech. 14:1-3; Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:24; Rom. 6:8, 7:4, 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:8-15, 4:2-5, 11:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:8; Heb 9:27, 12:5-8; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 20:10-15

- d. The Eternal State. We believe there are two eternal destinies for men, heaven and hell, the one for the righteous and penitent and the other for the unrighteous and impenitent. After the great white throne judgment, and after all enemies of God are consigned to their place of eternal punishment, the present order of things will be dissolved and the new heaven and the new earth where indwelleth righteousness shall be created as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever.

Ps. 9:17; Isa. 65:17, 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:7-22:7

B. ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

1. Ordinances

The Christian ordinances are two in number, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are ordinances appointed by Christ to be administered in the church, not as means of salvation, but as a visible sign of obedience to His commandments.

- a. Baptism. We believe that baptism by water is the symbol of one's union by faith with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, and constitutes the public confession of these spiritual realities to the world and is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Baptism is therefore to be administered by immersion to those who have been born again by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who give evidence of the genuineness of their salvation.

Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38-41, 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21; compare Mark 16:16

- b. The Lord's Supper. We believe the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ Himself on the night of His betrayal. We believe that it is as a memorial of Christ's death, a center of communion and fellowship, a testimony to saving faith, and a visible seal of Christ's redemptive covenant. It is to be observed only by the children of God and consists in partaking of the consecrated emblems of bread and the fruit of the vine, which symbolize the death of Christ for the remission of our sins

and our continual dependence upon Him for life and sustenance until He comes. While the Lord's Supper is open to all true believers regardless of denomination, each one is strongly exhorted to "examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 10:16, 11:23-24

2. Divine Healing

In the redemptive work of Christ, provision has been made for man's physical healing. This benefit may be realized by God's children on the basis of the conditions set forth in God's Word.

Gen. 3:16-19; Job 2:7; Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:16-17; Mark 6:13; Acts 10:38; James 5:13-16; 1 Pet. 2:24; compare Mark 16:17-18

3. The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is of divine origin. The Jewish Sabbath was obligatory upon those who lived under the Jewish economy. Desecration of this day invoked the wrath and judgment of God. In this present age the first day of the week has been set aside as the Lord's Day for rest and worship. This observance is commended to the followers of the Lord Jesus in commemoration of His glorious resurrection. The first day of the week has been kept as the Lord's Day by the church from apostolic times. It is imperative that with great care and godly fear we honor the Lord's day. While recognizing the fact that the Lord's Day is traditionally recognized as Sunday, we also acknowledge that some may be required to participate in business activities on this day. We must remain clear that this is truly at its root an issue of the individual believer's heart and one should not make provision to defile this day.

John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; compare Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Num. 15:32-36

4. Christian Stewardship

- a. God's ownership of all things creatively and redemptively is unquestioned in the Scriptures. Since we are saved by grace and the death of Christ provided our ransom, our whole being, body, soul, and spirit should be freely given to God, which is our reasonable service.
- b. Not only does God claim our love and devotion, but He has made us stewards of what we have in time, talent, and temporal goods. Since giving of our means to support the Lord's work is a scriptural injunction and an act of worship received and memorialized by our Lord, and since tithing antedates the Mosaic Law, was confirmed in the Law, and was approved by our Lord Jesus Christ, and since the New Testament clearly indicates that our giving is to be proportionate, believers are commanded to obey God's Word and tithe a minimum of ten percent of their first fruits. Our stewardship in material things is to be motivated by the spirit and example of our Lord who freely gave Himself for us all.
- c. As led by the Holy Spirit, members are encouraged to present offerings to the church. Offerings are gifts given above and beyond the biblically mandated tithe and are to be given with a glad heart. We recognize that these offerings may be other than monetary in nature and include such things as acts of service.

Gen. 4:3-5, 14:20, 28:22; Mal. 3:8, 10; Matt. 23:23; Acts 4:32; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:9, 9:6-7

5. Dedication of Children

We believe that the Scriptures teach the divine concern for the well-being of little children and their commitment to God. We, therefore, heartily encourage the formal dedication of little children in a public service of the church.

1 Sam. 1:24-28; Matt. 19:13-15

6. Marriage and the Home

- a. Marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God and is an indissoluble union of the husband and one wife until parted by death. Marriage, which is the foundation of the family and the Christian home, should only be entered into in the fear and will of God. Accordingly, a believer should not be united in holy matrimony with an unbeliever.

Gen. 2:24; Deut. 7:3; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:7, 39; 2 Cor. 6:14-17

- b. Ministers and parents have an obligation to teach the sanctity of marriage and to warn against believers being yoked with unbelievers. Trinity Fellowship Church ministers shall not officiate the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever.
- c. The home is a divinely ordained institution in which the husband is the head but serves its members by the law of love. Filial obedience is to be rendered by children in the spirit of mutual respect and love. The home is the most important institution in which to nurture children in the faith, and great care is to be exercised by pastors and parents in building homes that are genuinely and consistently Christian.

Deut. 6:4-9; Ps. 78:4-6; Eph. 5:22 and 25, 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21

7. Divorce

Divorce is viewed in the Scripture as contrary to God's will. Christians shall seek by forbearance and forgiveness to preserve the marriage bond.

Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:15-16; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:3-12; Mark 10:11-12; 1 Cor. 7:10-16

- a. Persons divorced and remarried who give evidence of being genuinely born again are eligible to be received into membership of the church.
- b. Divorce between members of the church is an occasion of great tragedy. Such conduct brings the teaching and reality of Christian reconciliation under reproach and offenders are to be disciplined.

Care should be exercised that such action be as redemptive as possible for all parties involved.

- c. Ministers are to refrain from performing marriage ceremonies where one or both parties are divorced, except where adultery of the previous marriage partner is involved. Where such persons are recognized as living genuine Christian lives, and where there is good evidence that a true Christian marriage is intended, ministers are permitted with the unanimous consent of the Elder Board and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to solemnize the marriage.

8. Practices and Conduct

The Scriptures clearly command that believers are not to be conformed to the worldview and lifestyle of the world of which they are a part, but, on the contrary, are to function as salt to prevent the spread of moral corruption and as light to dispel spiritual darkness. It is therefore imperative that they set high standards for their personal and collective life including the following:

- a. Their disposition and attitudes be characterized by Godliness and the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- b. Their social relationships bear witness to Christ, their entire conduct reflecting the spiritual ideals of Christianity rather than the world; they shall not marry unbelievers, shall not hold membership in oath-bound, secret societies and shall not compromise Christian principles in partnerships.
- c. Their bodies should be treated as temples of the Holy Spirit thus making it inconsistent with both Christian testimony and sound principles of health to damage their witness for Christ or their bodies by the abuse of tobacco, intoxicating beverages, narcotics and other harmful products.

Isa. 5:22; 1 Cor. 6:12, 19-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 5:18-26; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:2-4

9. Attitude Toward Civil Government

We believe that civil government is ordained of God for the welfare of society to promote and protect the good and to restrain and punish evil. Therefore, we consider it the duty of Christians to pray for rulers and for those that are in authority over them and to give due loyalty, respect, and obedience to them. Christians are also encouraged to take an active interest in government at all levels. Where the demands of civil law would contradict against the supreme law and will of God, Christians should obey God rather than man.

Dan. 4:17; Matt. 22:17-21; Acts 4:19, 5:29; Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14

10. Oaths

We believe a Christian's life should be so transparent in its honesty and integrity that his word can be fully trusted without the swearing of a formal oath. A judicial oath may be taken without violation of the Scriptures; however, affirmation is encouraged.

Ex. 20:7; Matt. 5:33-35, 37; Jas. 5:12; compare Rom. 1:9, 9:1-2; Heb. 6:13-18

ARTICLE V--CONSTITUENCY

A. MINISTERS

1. Definition

Ministers are men and women called of God to serve the church in an official leadership capacity who normally have special education for such a ministry, whose leadership roles are certified through licensure or ordination, and who receive financial remuneration for their services. This includes ministers such as pastors, evangelists, Christian education or youth ministers, chaplains, or persons directly involved in the theological training of people for ministry.

2. Qualifications

Ministers shall meet the following biblical qualifications:

- (1) Spiritual maturity and Christian character as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-23 and by the qualities required for Christian leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9;
- (2) Gifts of leadership confirmed by the Elder Board of Trinity Fellowship Church (Ephesians 4:11-14); and
- (3) A servant spirit which enables them to submit to the authority of God as they lovingly exercise that authority in ministering to the people of God (John 13:1-17; 1 Cor.4:1-2; Phil.2:1-11).

3. Church Enacted Discipline

All members in the church are expected to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in Scripture. Those who hold positions of ministerial leadership in the church are held to an even stricter accountability (James 3:1, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9). Such conduct includes moral purity (1 Cor. 6:9-10), personal honesty (Eph. 4:25), and biblical fidelity (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Rom. 16:17-18). Ministers are to be consistent examples of authentic Christianity as they seek to emulate the character of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:18). Furthermore, ministers shall promote the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 3:16-17) rather than seeking to divide it (Titus 3:10-11).

a. Purpose of Discipline. The church is commanded to discipline its members when they continue in open and habitual sin (Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13). Church discipline has multiple purposes including the following:

- (1) Encouraging the sinning member to repent, thus restoring him/her to fellowship with Christ and the church (2 Cor. 2:6-11, 7:8-10; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).
- (2) Warning other members against such sin (1 Tim. 5:19-20).
- (3) Upholding and maintaining the moral purity and blameless testimony of the church (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

b. Process of Discipline. No accusation shall be entertained against a minister unless it is brought by two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). Should any minister depart from the standard of Scripture and engage in conduct which conflicts with biblical principles of holiness, the steps of discipline outlined in Matt. 18:16-18; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10; and elsewhere in Scripture shall be followed.

- (1) The following steps shall be taken in the process of enforcing church discipline.
 - (a) Those making a formal accusation shall do so in writing to the Pastor and the Elder Board.
 - (c) Upon receipt of said formal accusation, the Elder Board and the Pastor will conduct a thorough review of the matter. If they conclude guilt, they will take the appropriate steps of admonishment or discipline that may include temporary suspension from the ministry.
- (2) In the event that a minister becomes separated from his/her spouse, in order to guard the integrity of Trinity Fellowship Church and to deal redemptively with the persons involved, he/she will be given an immediate leave of absence from duties. Within the next eight weeks the following steps shall be completed to resolve the situation:
 - (a) The Elder Board shall examine the case, attempt to effect a redemptive solution, and recommend appropriate action; and
 - (b) The Elder Board shall take the action.

1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5 and 4:12; Titus 1:7

- (3) The entire process shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care and sensitivity (Gal. 6:1).
- c. Restoration and Reinstatement to Ministry. When repentance is evident and after a minimum period of suspension, during which time the disciplined minister demonstrates genuine intent to "walk in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:24-25), application may be made for reinstatement.
- (1) "Minimum period of suspension" shall be defined as:
 - (a) In the case of sexual immorality (e.g., adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, etc.), two years
 - (b) In the case of other inappropriate sexual behavior, six months
 - (c) In the case of other moral deviation, six months
 - (d) In the case of deviations from the doctrine and practices of Trinity Fellowship Church, six months.
 - (e) The Elder Board can make a determination to change the term of the suspension when appropriate.
 - (2) This application must be made to the Pastor and the Elder Board.
 - (3) The entire process shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care and sensitivity (Gal. 6:1).
- d. Agreement of Ministers to Submit to the Process of Church Discipline. Every person who holds a position of minister explicitly consents to submit to the process of church discipline outlined above.
- e. The Right of Appeal Under Due Process. A disciplined minister has the right, under this Constitution, to appeal a decision.

B. OFFICERS

An officer in the church shall hold to sound doctrine as defined in this Constitution in Article IV.A.1.-6., shall model the characteristics of spiritual maturity and Christian life including conformity to the standards in Article IV.B.1.-10., shall evidence a God-given gift for leadership, shall have developed both the heart of a servant and the skills of a leader, and shall know how to exercise authority for the building up of the church and for the glory of God.

Not all mature Christians have gifts of leadership and not all officers have identical gifts or characteristics. Leadership functions include guidance of the church in establishing goals and objectives, helping members identify and use their gifts for the good of both

the person and the church, keeping satisfaction of personal and group needs in balance, teaching, counseling, and administering discipline.

The officers of this church may be pastor, deacons, elders, Sunday school superintendent or Christian education director, chairman, if other than pastor, secretary and/or treasurer and other officers as may be needed. These officers shall be members of Trinity Fellowship Church.

The above standard shall be applied to other leaders as defined in the local church bylaws.

1. Pastor

- a. The Pastor is believed to be called by and appointed by God. Removal of the pastor can only be accomplished by (1) resignation, (2) unanimous decision by the Elder Board, or (3) an act of God.
- b. Duties. A pastor shall be an example to the flock of God by keeping himself free from all worldly entanglements and above reproach in all matters of conduct and finance. It shall be his duty to preach the Word; to exercise prayerful and diligent oversight of the church, watching for the souls thereof as one that must give account; and to seek earnestly the salvation of the lost, that in all things he may be approved unto God. The pastor shall be recognized as head of the church and shall be responsible for the public services and general promotion of the church activities. He shall be an advisory member of all committees (if any). It shall be his prerogative, with the approval of the Elder Board, to arrange for all special meetings and to engage the necessary help for the same.

2. Ministry Staff

Full or part-time ministry staff may be hired provided the person has been approved by the Elder Board after the review of the individual's credentials, including the examination of their spiritual gifts.

3. Elders

- a. Selection. There shall be a minimum of three (3) elders in the church. The process of selection may, but shall not be required to, include nominations from the membership, appointment by the pastor, review by the current Elder Board and pastor, and a unanimous decision by the Elder Board. The term of this office shall be one (1) year, unless there are no nominations or candidates that meet the requirements as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. If there are none, the current Elder Board will remain for a continuing one (1) year term.
- b. Duties. The elders shall assist the pastor in the spiritual duties of the church, primarily in matters such as spiritual advice, leadership accountability, church discipline, and making disciples.

5. Deacons

- a. Selection. Their qualifications shall be such as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- b. Duties. The deacons shall assist the pastor in the spiritual duties of the church, provide the emblems for the Lord's Supper, and provide general care for the congregation.

6. General Sunday School Superintendent

- a. Selection. The Associate Pastor shall fill this position until such time as the need exists to add additional staff.
- b. Duties. The superintendent shall have general oversight of the Sunday school.

7. Church Secretary

- a. Selection. The church secretary shall be chosen by means of application and approval by the pastor and the Elder Board. The secretary shall keep a church register and shall issue transfers, letters and certificates as authorized by either the Elder Board or the pastor.

8. Treasurer

- a. Selection. The church treasurer shall be chosen by means of application and approval by the pastor and the Elder Board
- b. Duties. It shall be the duty of the treasurer to receive and to hold all monies of the church; to issue receipts where necessary; to pay all obligations regularly as directed by the church Elder Board; and to give a report of the treasury to the congregation upon request at the regularly scheduled business meetings.

C. Elder Board

1. Membership

The Elder Board shall include the pastor and at least two additional men from either the staff or the congregation. For additional information see Article IV, D, 3(a)(b).

2. Meetings

The Elder Board shall meet at least once per month. Special meetings may be called by any member of the Elder Board.

3. Duties

The duties of the Elder Board shall be the transaction of business, prayer, and consultation relative to the work of the church. The board shall make arrangements for the support of the pastor and such workers as may be engaged by them. It shall pass upon all applicants for church membership.

POSITION PAPERS

POSITION PAPERS AND THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the Church is the basic statement of denominational beliefs and practices. Constitutional items are protected against rash and hurried action by the body by means of a set time for advance notice and a two-thirds affirmative action by the body.

Position papers on the other hand serve as an application or amplification of our basic doctrinal position. Such a paper usually enlarges on one small section of the Constitution or addresses some other position of the church that needs to be elucidated for the constituency. These documents tend to be developed as the direct result of a culturally pressing problem which needs clarification. Some position papers apply biblical principles where no specific Scripture may directly mention that problem, such as gambling. Others give explanation of doctrinal positions, such as the papers on the gift of tongues and the assurance of the believer. Still others address situations that are relevant to the day in which we live and add clarity to the denominational stance, such as the paper on homosexuality.

I. AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Human beings were the zenith of God's creative activity. The first pair was charged with the superintendence of God's created order in a manner which would demonstrate responsibility to both the Creator and the creation (Gen. 1:27-31). Clearly, since humans are to have dominion over the created order, they must seek to understand it. Therefore, the quest for knowledge is a necessary activity. In like manner, if humans are to be responsible to God, they must know something of God's character, who God is and what He requires.

Education is the discovery and implementation of truth, truth about God and truth about creation, in such manner that persons become all that they are meant to be, accountable stewards who are fully aware of responsibilities to God, others and the world.

THE CONTENT OF EDUCATION

The content of education defines the proper subject matter of the educational process. The church has historically thought of education as the study of a two-fold revelation, designated as special revelation and general revelation.

Special Revelation

Special revelation is the Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as commonly received. The Bible reveals propositional truth about God, man, and the universe, truth which cannot be discovered from any other source. The Bible informs about origins and presents human activity within the circle of God's sovereignty. The Bible makes human existence meaningful and assures a destiny with purpose. Biblical absolutes are intended to provide the foundation stones for all structures of society. Therefore, the study of the Bible, both as an end in itself and a means to an end (the proper interpretation of the meaning of the universe) is a legitimate pursuit.

General Revelation

General revelation comes from observance of the universe. By observing, categorizing and experimenting with the created order, knowledge is gathered about God, others and the world. Therefore, study of every facet of the universe, including mankind as relation to it and responsibility toward it, is a legitimate pursuit.

The Integration of Faith and Learning

Special revelation and general revelation have a relationship that is both hierarchical and complementary. The relationship is hierarchical in that special revelation always takes precedence over general revelation and provides a framework for what is learned from the study of general revelation. Exploration of the universe will yield insight into its form and function, but only the Bible reveals the purpose of the existence of the universe. The relationship is complementary in that neither will yield information which contradicts the other when

properly understood. The study of both is essential for a balanced understanding of the nature and meaning of things. An adequate worldview cannot be developed apart from such a holistic approach to education.

THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

Meaningful education enrolls the student at the cradle and graduates the student at the grave.

The Home and Education

The first and foremost responsibility for education rests with parents. Both the Old and New Testaments elevate the home to the level of an educational institution. God said to Israel:

"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." (Deut. 6:6-7)

The New Testament ideal is found in Ephesians 6:4:

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

While both of these passages seemingly refer to religious education, they also imply that a spiritual context is essential to all learning. It is in the home that the child first learns about others and the world around him. Interpersonal relationships, formative attitudes, habit patterns and value systems are directly related to home training. The church properly responds to this awareness when it makes available to parents the support and resources necessary to fulfill the task.

The School and Education

Since it is logistically difficult for most homes to provide an adequate education, parents have chosen to band together in a community to provide a formal setting for their children's education. In the western world this has assumed the form of compulsory public education. Some parents, out of concern to teach a specific value system or religious heritage, have provided alternate education programs, the private school and home schooling. It is the right of parents to choose public, private or home schooling without interference from the state.

All Christians have a biblical responsibility as citizens to seek to use existing structure to influence community schools to reflect their desired philosophy of life and value system. In a pluralistic society, Christians should request that traditional biblical values be fairly presented in the market place of ideas.

Higher Education

Contemporary complex social structures and the sheer mass of knowledge about the universe require a longer period of formal schooling than was necessary in former generations. The same biblical concern which brings the church into involvement with education in the home and school will properly carry that concern into higher education. The need for an integration of faith and learning never ceases. Higher education is only a difference of degree, not a difference of kind. The more intense and specialized curricula of higher education must be placed in the correct context, a balanced worldview which gives correct place to God, others and the universe. Hence, the church should encourage her people to pursue higher education.

From within the context of the church, the Holy Spirit calls certain individuals to specific roles (Eph. 4:11-16). Both the Old and New Testaments, and the church through the centuries, have recognized that God calls and anoints some to special leadership roles. Appropriate programs in Christian liberal arts colleges, Bible colleges and theological seminaries are essential if those who are called by the Holy Spirit are to receive proper training. Such programs of study will be designed to allow those called of God to develop their fullest potential for leadership roles at all levels of the church.

The Local Church and Education

In addition to providing support for the home and sponsoring institutions of formal education, the church should provide programs and opportunities for all of her adherents to learn more about God, the Bible, and Christian living. Every activity and organization of the church, should have education as one of its goals. The discovery and implementation of truth is always a proper concern of the church. When seen in this light, everything the church does has an element of education.

EDUCATION AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission as given by the Lord makes teaching an obligation of the church (Matt. 28:19-20). It is essential for educational activity to accompany evangelism. The nurture which follows is, by definition, a process which begins at the new birth and continues throughout life. The discovery and implementation of truth to every arena of life, and especially the application of a Christian value system, are essential to discipleship.

II. THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Introduction

A revival of speaking in tongues influenced North America and other parts of the world in the last century, and the effects of this revival continue today. This movement has had a broad scope geographically, culturally and socially. So it is not surprising that there has also been a wide variation in the experiences and degrees of involvement in this phenomenon, as well as in the acceptance or rejection of the people and groups who espouse this teaching. Some who speak in tongues teach and insist that the gift of tongues is the evidence or sign that one is filled with the Holy Spirit. Some who do not speak in tongues teach and insist that the gift of tongues is not for this age, but was only for the time of the apostles and the birth of the church. Others find themselves somewhere in between.

The Church believes the entire record of the Bible concerning the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of tongues must be understood against this larger backdrop.

A Spirit-Filled Life Will Be Characterized by Both the Fruit of the Spirit and Proper Use of the Gifts of the Spirit

We believe that every Christian should be filled with the Spirit. This truth must continue to have strong emphasis in our teaching and preaching. The Spirit-filled life is a basic tenet of Trinity Fellowship Church from its beginning, and our Constitution states what we believe concerning the work of the Spirit in people's lives: "The divine work of making men holy begins in repentance and regeneration, yet through a subsequent crisis experience the believer is to die to self, to be purified in heart, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that he may be separated wholly unto God to serve Him in righteousness and holiness. After the crisis experience, the believer is to be perfected in holiness in the fear of God and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Historically, the Church has stood for a warm-hearted, vital experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We have endeavored to hold to a correct interpretation of the Christian life as presented in the Scriptures. We believe there is an experience of the Spirit's fullness subsequent to the conversion experience. The vitality of this Spirit-filled life is dependent on a continual day-by-day abiding in Christ in complete abandonment to His will. This life will be characterized by both the fruit of the Spirit and a proper use of the gifts of the Spirit. We still maintain this position.

Possessing Spiritual Gifts Is Not Evidence for the Fullness of the Spirit

Gifts can obviously be counterfeited. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 are sobering: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" If some of the greater gifts, such as prophecy, can be exercised so as to be regarded by Jesus as a work of iniquity, we should not be surprised when other gifts also become a counterfeit of Satan.

So while we recognize the gifts of the Holy Spirit as taught in Scripture to be valid gifts for the church today, no particular gift or gifts are the necessary or required evidence of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, nor are they considered as the evidence of Christian maturity.

Although there are several instances in Scripture where people spoke in a tongue following an infilling of the Holy Spirit, this is not normative throughout Scripture. We believe these instances are descriptive of what happened during a unique time of historical transition, chronicled in the book of Acts. However the absence of explicit commands in the New Testament letters linking the practice of tongues to Spirit-filled living indicates that these instances are not intended to be prescriptive for all Christians in the

church era. Furthermore, to insist that speaking in tongues is evidence of the Holy Spirit's fullness invalidates the experience of all those believers whose lives have given abundant evidence of the power of the Spirit but who have never spoken in tongues.

The Gifts of the Spirit Are for “The Common Good” in the Body of Christ

Every Christian has at least one gift. “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit “just as He determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11). Christians should not expect to receive or to exercise any one particular gift, several gifts, or all the gifts. With this fact in mind Paul asked, “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (1 Corinthians 12:29-30). It is clear, grammatically and contextually, that the intended answer to these questions is, “No.” Therefore, Christians need each other.

Gifts are always related to service and are not to be used as a measure of Christian experience. Gifts are not to be exercised selfishly, but are for the profit of the whole body.

The Gift of Tongues Must Be Practiced with Orderliness, Unity and Love

Speaking in tongues is referred to in scripture both in corporate and private worship. The guidelines for speaking in tongues in a corporate setting are found in 1 Corinthians 14 and state 1) that no more than two or, at the most, three may speak in a tongue during a service, and 2) there must be one present who can interpret. Paul says that in the church he would rather speak five intelligible words than ten thousand in a tongue. Private speaking in tongues refers to a private conversation with God. Paul sees limited value in this, however, since the benefit consists only in the personal edification of the speaker—not the edification of the entire body (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4).

The gift of tongues is not intended to be divisive. However, due to the passion people have for their positions, both the acceptance and the rejection of tongues have often caused division in churches, homes, and other groups. Pride and division in the Corinthian church created problems in the unity of the body. The instruction clearly shows that loveless Christianity, unbiblical judgment of others, rifts in a congregation, and refusal to listen to the teaching of Scripture are not of the Holy Spirit.

Christians Should Be Known by Their Fruit Rather Than by Their Gifts

Trinity Fellowship Church considers the biblical distinction between the gifts and the graces of the Spirit important. The gifts of the Spirit are clearly presented in 1 Corinthians 12. The graces of the Spirit are bound together by love (1 Corinthians 13), and the desire for spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14:1) must be preceded by earnest pursuit of love. The graces of the Spirit are also identified as fruit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is evident that one may possess a gift or several of the gifts of the Spirit without enjoying the necessary graces of the Spirit. A gift, such as prophecy, can be exercised without the grace of love and thus be little more than noise. (1 Corinthians 13:1).

The graces or fruit of the Spirit make it possible for the Christian to exercise the gifts of the Spirit in a manner that will bring glory to God and will bring His blessing upon and enhance the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ. Since Paul presents love as “the most excellent way,” it suggests that love is the true essence of all the graces of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31b). The truth of 1 Corinthians 13 indicates that this is so. All of the other graces or fruit spring out of love: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Christians should be known by their fruit rather than by their gifts. The most visible evidence of the fullness of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is love: love for God, love for the body of Christ, and love for a lost world.

Summary

The believer must have a passion for the Person of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of gifts. The Bible clearly teaches that the Christian life is a relationship with a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is made real to us by the Holy Spirit.

The Church believes that the consuming passion of the Holy Spirit is to present and glorify Christ (John 15:26). Anything that detracts from the central theme, Jesus Christ, lessens the effectiveness of the church. Like Paul, we are “resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Seeking manifestations more than seeking Christ is a danger to be avoided.

Pastors should teach the Spirit-filled, victorious Christian life—not as an option for the Christian, but as a necessity. Our congregation needs to know the deepened experience of the grace of God in their lives. We must not lose sight of what God has already done for us or deny His past blessings. We counsel our people to be “led by the Spirit of God” (Romans 8:14) and “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (1 Corinthians 12:31, 14:39).

III. THE ASSURANCE OF THE BELIEVER

The Scriptures teach that the Christian believer may have the blessed assurance of being saved. He need not live in uncertainty as to his relationship with God. He can know beyond doubt that his sins are forgiven and he is a child of God.

Assurance of Acceptance

First, the believer may be assured by the witness of the Spirit, that inward evidence of acceptance with God. "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom 8:16). "And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit whom He hath given us" (1 John 3:24). The Spirit bears witness after faith has been exercised in the promises of God (Cf. Heb. 11:5-6).

Other evidences are also given by which the believer may be certain about his saved relationship. The first Epistle of John, which centers on knowing, conditions that certainty on such evidences as conforming one's life to the Word of God (2:3-5); living righteously (2:29; 3:7-10); loving fellow Christians (3:14-15); possessing an uncondemning heart (3:19-21); and living victoriously over sin and Satan (5:18).

Assurance of Security

There is another aspect to assurance, the certainty of being kept. We may enjoy assurance of present acceptance, but what about the future? Can we have the assurance of perseverance? Sometimes defeated people are discouraged from beginning the Christian life for fear they will not "hold out".

There is no question about the gracious purpose and the power of God to keep His own from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). God's enabling power far exceeds even our asking. He "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). God is greater than every degree and kind of opposition. Paul therefore asks, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). No outside enemy or force is strong enough to sever us from the love of God. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

Condition of Security

We need not worry, therefore, about God's ability or loving purpose to make us final victors. But this outcome is not automatic nor inevitable. Throughout the New Testament it is consistently taught that the keeping power of God becomes effective through the exercise of faith. The elect "are kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews, addressing them as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," calls for steadfast faith: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:1, 14).

Let us observe that the scriptural condition for salvation is believing. "He who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:26). See also John 3:16, 18; 5:24; 6:40, 47. But the word "believeth" used in all of these passages is in the present tense, and it means "to believe and to continue to believe." It is the continuous or progressive present, and implies not only an initial act of faith but a maintained attitude. Assurance of security, therefore, is for the believing one. We are saved by faith and we are kept by faith.

False Security

Nowhere in the New Testament is it suggested that a Christian can presume on his saved relationship. Nowhere is the idea conveyed that he has "arrived" and all he needs to do is "coast in" because of an initial act of faith. Nowhere is encouragement given to the backslider that since he was once saved he will always be saved. Nowhere is there any support for the antinomian heresy that a Christian can indulge in sin with impunity. On the contrary, followers of Christ are exhorted to "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41); "to beware lest ye also being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17); "to give diligence to

make your calling and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10); to hold "faith and a good conscience" in order to avoid shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:18); to "be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8); to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23); to "stand fast in the Lord" (Phil. 4:1).

The Christian is warned of mortal dangers through salt losing its savor (Lk. 14:34-35); through failing to abide in Christ (John 15:6); in being moved away from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1:23); in erring from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10); in being taken captive by the devil (2 Tim. 2:24, 26); in neglecting so great a salvation (Heb. 2:3); in departing (apostatizing) from the living God (Heb. 3:12); in being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13); in willfully sinning (Heb. 10:26-31); in erring from the truth (James 5:19-20); in being overcome by the world (2 Pet. 2:20-22); in leaving one's first love (Rev. 2:4, 5).

This is the clear teaching of the New Testament. God's sovereign provision is coupled with human responsibility. The declarations of Scripture are always linked with demands, the indicatives with imperatives. Security is for the one who is believing. We are kept by the power of God through faith. The classical passages on God's keeping power, John 10 and Romans 8, both condition security on human faith evidenced in obedience. The promise of eternal life and protection from enemies is for those who hear the voice of Christ and follow Him (John 10:27-28). The promises in Romans 8:29-39 are for those who love God (vs. 28), a love which will be demonstrated by keeping the commandments of Christ (See John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10; compare Matt. 28:19-20).

Truth in Balance

These complementary truths, divine sovereignty and human responsibility, have not always been kept in balance. In fact, men, seizing upon one to the exclusion of the other, have tried to erect entire theological systems on only one of them. For example, Calvin, who was preceded by Augustine, erected his system on the principle of the sovereignty of God with five main points: (1) unconditional election; (2) limited atonement; (3) total moral inability and depravity; (4) irresistible grace; and (5) the final perseverance of the saints. Calvin held that God predestinated some, including babies, to be saved; others to be damned. The difference in destinies was found not in any human response to or rejection of the gospel but in the inscrutable will of God. Some of his followers have carried these principles to fatalistic extremes. They have opposed any evangelistic or missionary effort as an affront to God's sovereignty. Many so-called Calvinists today hold greatly modified views of the system even though they still hold to the capstone of the structure "Once in grace, always in grace" or "Once saved, always saved."

Arminius, who belonged to the generation following Calvin, attempted to counter the Calvinistic system by insisting upon (1) election conditioned upon God's foreknowledge of individual response to the gospel; (2) atonement with the world in view; (3) moral good only through regeneration based on the faith of the individual; (4) possibility of resisting grace; (5) perseverance through the help of the Holy Spirit by the response of faith. On these five points, Trinity Fellowship Church is in agreement, but some of those who followed Arminius went much further. They built their system on the principle of human freedom to the exclusion of divine sovereignty and came out with a revised form of the heresy of Pelagianism. They denied human depravity, affirmed man's inherent goodness, stressed human effort and volition, and ended up with salvation by works.

Final Arbiter

The final arbiter of truth is the Word of God, to which Church is committed. The Word sets forth both the truth of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God in His sovereignty chose to create man a free being to exercise choice within His sovereign purpose.

Admittedly, the operation of both transcends human understanding, but the greatest theologian of all time, the Apostle Paul, holding to both could only bow in praise before the unsearchable wisdom of God. In the 9th chapter of Romans, he sets forth in unrelieved clarity God's initiative, purpose, and work in saving man by sovereign grace. "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" But in the chapter which follows, man's responsibility is set forth with such emphasis that the initiative for his salvation seems to rest solely with him: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Then the Apostle places still more responsibility on man: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Then in the 11th chapter of Romans, these two great principles are repeatedly joined. The fact is stated, but the method transcends human understanding. The great theologian can only express wonder and praise as he marvels at the transcendent ways of God: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

To sum up, the Scriptures teach both divine sovereignty and human responsibility. They teach, on the one hand, the adequacy of God's provision in grace to save us, and on the other hand, the need of exercising and maintaining faith to make the provision of salvation

effective. Through faith the believer may enjoy the assurance of both present acceptance and God's keeping power. But a lapse of vital, operative, obedient faith can lead to tragedy. New Testament Christians are warned that there is no escape from the consequences of persistent backsliding and that the possibility of apostasy is a biblical reality. Throughout the New Testament, Christians are urged to maintain a steadfast faith in and fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. ABORTION

Abortion has been catapulted into the forefront of the ethical problems confronting Christians today. The issue has been nurtured in a general climate of moral relativism, a growing sexual permissiveness, and a threatening population explosion.

The moral issue of abortion is more than a question of the freedom of a woman to control the reproductive functions of her body. It is rather a question of those circumstances under which a human being may be permitted to take the life of another.

We believe that all life is a gift of God, so that neither the life of the unborn child nor the mother may be lightly taken. We believe that in Scripture God Himself has conferred divine blessing upon unborn infants and has provided penalties for actions which result in the death of the unborn.

Trinity Fellowship Church believes that abortion for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment or economic advantage is morally wrong. Consequently, we urge our pastors and people to become well informed concerning alternatives to abortion.

We also recognize certain traumatic conditions such as rape and incest which may result in pregnancy and which can create a serious threat to the psychological well-being of the mother and any existing family. We do not believe that the scriptural answer is to end the new life which may have resulted from such traumatic circumstances. We do strongly urge that total and continual Christian understanding and support be shown by the membership of the local church to the mother and any family involved during the pregnancy and following the birth.

Furthermore, Trinity Fellowship Church believes that local congregation and individual members must accept responsibility, under God, for the acceptance and loving care of all those born into this world as a result of our strong stand against abortion and that ministries should be offered to such persons within and without the church fellowship.

V. LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

The leadership principles of Trinity Fellowship Church are derived from and based upon God's infallible Word. Specifically the foundation has been established for us in the book of Acts.

The first New Testament principle to be noted is that every church leader demonstrates exemplary Christian character (1Tim. 3, Tit. 1:5-9). In pagan societies even to this day, character is not as important as the pragmatic ability to get results. Whoever can control spiritual power most effectively is looked to as a spiritual leader, regardless of his or her personal character or ethics. In the church, however, what a person is is more basic than what he can do. A leader is to be a living demonstration of the highest qualities of Christian life and thought and a living proof that biblical ethics work. These qualities and the living proof are not required only of leaders. Every Christian, whether in a leadership role or not, should be marked by them. The ideal is "every man mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). The point is that the basic qualification for leadership is a significant degree of spiritual maturity based on sound doctrine and continuing spiritual growth. A significant factor in this maturing process will be a lifestyle which puts into practice biblical values and which resists the molding pressures of contemporary non-Christian cultural values.

A second principle related to Christian leadership is that service is more important than status. Jesus made it clear that His followers were not to seek position or power for themselves (Matt. 20:20-28; John 13:16). There is one Lord; and the words meaning "rule" (Greek words with the root arch) are never used in the New Testament in reference to relationships among Christians. So the Christian leader is not a ruler; he is a servant, although not primarily a servant of the people he serves. He is primarily a servant of God from whom he receives his guidance and direction.

For the leader to function only on the level of the group is to abdicate the role of the leader. This balance between being a servant and being a leader is demonstrated for us by Jesus Himself. The accounts of the cleansing of the temple and the washing of the disciples' feet

picture for us the balance which should be found in a leader, as one who exercises authority and yet ministers to the people with the heart of a servant.

A related principle is that leadership is more a matter of function than office, of doing the ministry than of being a minister. Leadership in groups almost always begins as a ministry function and gradually becomes institutionalized into an office. The tendency, then, is to begin to think of holding the office rather than of performing the function of a servant-leader. Seeking an office for personal satisfaction or as the base for exercising authority is contrary to the biblical concept of servant-leadership.

A third principle relates to the existence of various types of leaders, ranging from the prophetic type, characterized by the ability to motivate people to obey the Word of God, to the priestly type, more akin to our modern concept of management. The latter type of leader will organize and run the programs conceived by the former, and some leaders will have varying degrees of these characteristics. The danger is that tension may arise between the two functions or between the people carrying out the functions, or that one function will tend to predominate at the expense of the other. For this reason, some prefer to distinguish between leadership and management.

However we may define the terms, we need to recognize that the body needs all of its members and both types of leadership.

A distinction is also made between professional and lay leaders. The concept of professional church leaders is not as clear in the New Testament as the general concept that leadership is a legitimate function in the church. Professionalism has grown as the church has developed institutional identity. The cultural factors become significant when dealing with this aspect of leadership. The church in a tribe with a subsistence level economy would not have the option of professional leaders although it would certainly need leaders. The house churches in places where there is government suppression of Christianity, as in China, do not have the option of professional leadership as we know it, but the criteria for leaders would still apply.

This does not make professional clergy unbiblical; but it does mean that we need to begin with a concept of leadership in the church which comes from biblical principles and which recognizes that some of our common concepts and patterns of leadership are more a product of 20th century Western society than a project of biblical principles or patterns.

A fourth principle underlying leadership in the church involves the recognition by the leader and by the church that a qualification for leaders is the possession of the appropriate leadership gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is why a leader needs more than just the general qualities of mature Christian character. All members of the body should possess these, and persons who are not in leadership posts are not exempt from the need to reach such standards. Neither are they second class members of the church. It is simply a matter of recognizing that God in His sovereignty has given various gifts to the members of His body and that they need to be recognized not on a hierarchical basis but on the basis that all gifts are for the building up of the church. A leader, then, is one who has God-given leadership gifts and uses them within the church with the spirit of a servant.

The fifth principle is that Christian leadership involves skills which need to be developed through careful study and practice. Those skills may vary with the cultural expectations of leaders and with the complexity of the organization involved, but diligence in order to be "a workman who has no need to be ashamed" applies to leaders as well as to every other member of the church.

These skills will include varying combinations of such things as guiding in the development of purposes, goals and objectives; motivating the church in the pursuit of these ends; instructing the church in God's Word; helping the members of the church identify and use their gifts for the good of the church and the fulfillment of the person; keeping group and personal need-satisfaction in balance; counseling; encouraging; organizing and managing the activities and ministries of the church; administering discipline; serving musically; and doing evangelism and church planting in unreached areas.

A caution needs to be raised about the tendency to confuse certain personality types with gifts of leadership. Stereotypes of leaders are sometimes formed on less than valid biblical criteria, and anyone who fits the stereotype is thought to be a potential leader. Adherence to the above principles will help to avoid the error.

A second caution relates to the tendency for leaders to seek to avoid the risks involved in leadership by shunning the role entirely or by trying to transfer responsibility to the church or to a committee or board. It is clear from Scripture that God's people have not always been willing to follow God's appointed leaders. Jeremiah's case is an outstanding example of this resistance. This can prove to be a severe test for the servant-leader.

In summary, the criteria for leadership in the church are: (1) spiritual maturity as defined by the Scriptures, (2) a servant spirit committed to the service of the church, (3) a sense of divine call, (4) appropriate spiritual gifts, and (5) developed leadership skills.

VI. HOMOSEXUALITY

The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Gen. 2:24), and formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to be one flesh. In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-23). Everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bonds of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

Homosexual activity, like adulterous relationships, is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. In Leviticus 18:22, God declares the practice of homosexuality an abomination in His sight. In Romans 1:26-27 the practice of homosexuality is described as a degrading and unnatural passion. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 identifies the practice of homosexuality as a sin that, if persisted in, brings grave consequences in this life and excludes one from the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul, strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those once engaged in homosexuality were among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations need to maintain the belief that all human beings have sinned, and that all Christians have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly, and hostile to God. In the name of Christ we proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and power for godly living for all who repent and believe the gospel.

We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality. While homosexuals as individuals are entitled to Civil Rights, including equal protection of the law, Trinity Fellowship Church opposes legislation which would extend special consideration to such individuals based upon their "sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimizing the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to so-called "Gay Rights" legislation, where such legislation has been enacted into law, Trinity Fellowship Church strongly urges that churches and organizations be exempted from compliance by amendment to the law. The position and practice of such organizations regarding homosexuality is determined by their religious convictions. This we hold to be a grave matter of religious freedom.

Members of Trinity Fellowship Church should compassionately proclaim the good news of forgiveness and encourage those involved in homosexual practices to cease those actions, accept forgiveness, and pray for deliverance, as nothing is impossible with God. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven sinner (1 Cor. 6:11).

We recognize that there is no need for us to offer condemnation to anyone for the act of homosexuality, as they already stand condemned under the law (Romans 3:23). We further recognize the need to love the sinner, regardless of that sin, while not condoning the sin; in this case homosexuality.

VII. PORNOGRAPHY AND OBSCENITY

DEFINITIONS:

Pornography: From the Greek words *porne* (harlot) and *graphos* (writing). Webster's Dictionary defines pornography as: (1) originally a description of prostitutes and their trade; (2) writings, pictures, etc. intended to arouse sexual desire.

Obscenity: From the Latin word *obscaenus* ("ob" means to, "caenum" means filth). Webster's Dictionary defines obscene as: (1) offensive to modesty or decency, lewd, impure; (2) foul, filthy, repulsive, disgusting.

Pornography is a multi-billion dollar industry in America that has grown and continues to grow in epidemic proportions and is invading and affecting every segment of society. It promotes a lifestyle that is in direct conflict with the holy living that is taught in the Word of God. There is no question that pornography is addictive and it is plainly apparent that family, church and community values and relationships are being seriously affected by this industry.

Trinity Fellowship Church recognizes the seriousness of this issue. As a church body we will take a strong stand against the sell, distribution and use of this material in and around our community.

VIII. INTERNET AWARENESS

Trinity Fellowship Church recognizes the need for taking advantage of the latest technologies as it relates to electronic communication and the use of the World Wide Web (WWW). Electronic communication may include, but is not limited to, cell phones, PDA's, personal computers, etc...

While we recognize the fact that this technology has many practical and beneficial advantages, we must clearly point out the dangerous aspects of the misuse of this technology.

1. As it relates to personal information:

While we are called to "love one another" we must not be ignorant of the fallen world we live in. When applying or registering to certain formats of electronic media, individuals should avoid disclosing personal information that can be used for evil purposes. This would include any address information, credit card numbers, telephone numbers, photographs, etc...

In addition to revealing your personal information, there are numerous instances recorded of people operating under false identity with other than pure intentions. Sexual predators and otherwise have access to this technology and are fully aware of how to utilize it for evil.

It is imperative that when we use these technologies that we are well informed and operate with wisdom to provide a safe environment for us and our families.

2. As it relates to those who are in a marriage covenant:

Many aspects of the of these technologies may seem innocent due to the fact that there may be no physical interaction between the two parties, however, we can not overlook the emotional connection that can and typically will occur between the two parties. Such relationships are inappropriate with or without the knowledge of the spouse. The spouse who is accessing these technologies in the pursuit of a relationship is in danger of allowing an emotional relationship to develop. This relationship may allow the parties involved to establish a baseline that is purely fantasy. When these parties compare their fantasy relationship to the reality of the marriage covenant, the fantasy relationship will undoubtedly win as one is only allowed to know those aspects revealed via electronic communication. Apart from any fantasy, sexual or otherwise, either party will most likely depend on the electronic relationship for nurturing and encouragement that clearly is the responsibility of their spouse. In such cases where the uninvolved spouse is not providing biblical care and love, biblical counseling should be sought out to help restore the marriage relationship in such a way as to bring glory and honor to the Lord.

3. As it relates to singles:

In society today we see more and more avenues to identify individuals for potential relationships. These various programs are established to simplify or streamline the identification process by offering platforms for sharing personal information in a non-threatening environment. There are many obvious dangers to this venue. One danger is that individuals are clearly capable of providing false or misleading information in an effort to establish a relationship with evil intent. False information will undoubtedly prevent an individual from accurately understanding a person's personal beliefs and background. There are numerous forms of predators who utilize technology to fulfill a perceived need that will result in either physical or emotional harm of another individual.

It is the belief of Trinity Fellowship Church that in today's society it is tempting to utilize such technologies for purposes other than proper communication, staying informed, and personal study or research. Christians should be on guard and informed about the dangers of such use.

Gen 39:9-12, Prov 5:8, Prov 18:1-3, Psalm 33:16, I Cor 6:13, I Cor 6:18-20, I Cor 15:33, I Thess 4:3, I Thess 5:22

IX. BIBLICAL INERRANCY

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith and conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself truth and speaks truth only, has inspired holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters: it is to be believed as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the church.

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

- Article I We affirm that the holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.
- We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the church, tradition, or any other human source.
- Article II We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the church is subordinate to that of Scripture.
- We deny that church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.
- Article III We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.
- We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.
- Article IV We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.
- We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation.
- We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.
- Article V We affirm that God's revelation within the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed to the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII We affirm that God in His work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar, of spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

- Article XV We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.
- We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.
- Article XVI We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the church's faith throughout its history.
- We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.
- Article XVII We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.
- We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.
- Article XVIII We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.
- We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.
- Article XIX We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.
- We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the church.

X. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

The important role of women in ministry is clearly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments (See Judges 4-5; Esther 1-9; Acts 18:14-28; Acts 21:8-9; and Romans 16:1-2.). We believe that it is consistent with scripture that we clearly affirm her understanding with regard to that role.

As members of the body of Christ, all women have been given spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). Furthermore, God has uniquely gifted certain women for administrative and certain leadership roles. We recognize that it is God's will that these women engage in church and para-church ministries, such as serving on boards and committees, teaching Sunday school classes that do not include men, and serving on ministerial staffs.

We affirm the essential equality of men and women with regard to their standing before God and the inherited blessings of salvation (1 Cor. 11:11; Gal. 3:28). At the same time, there is a functional difference reflected in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. This difference does not deny the essential equality of men and women, just as God being the head of Christ does not deny the essential equality of the Father and the Son (1 Cor. 11:3).

We believe that the New Testament words "elder," "overseer," and "pastor-teacher" refer, with differing implications, to the same office (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Eph. 4:11; compare 1 Tim. 2:12). These New Testament references indicate that this office should be filled by men. The position of the pastor in a church with one pastor or the senior pastor in a church with multiple staff is the contemporary equivalent of this New Testament office.

We believe what the New Testament teaches about the role of women in ministry is God's continuing will for His people in every era.

XI. ORDINATION

We understand that the New Testament does not provide an absolute definition of ordination. However, we recognize the need to have a system for credentialing ministers that satisfies church and governmental requirements. We refer to this credentialing procedure as licensing and ordination.

Licensing is our recognition of the calling, giftedness and preparation of a person for a life of vocational ministry.

Ordination is the consecration of a person to ministry upon full proof of calling, giftedness and preparation as affirmed by the church.

We believe the responsibility and authority that accompanies licensing and ordination is primarily moral and spiritual and merits appropriate respect and submission from those served.

XII. OUR VALUES

It is appropriate that we declare where we stand to our constituency, to a younger generation, and to the world at large. We expect this declaration to influence our concerns, shape our policies, fashion our strategies and determine short and long-range goals.

WE STAND ...FOR the essentials of the Christian faith as expressed in our Statement of Faith--
...AGAINST the denial of God's Word as final authority in matters of faith and practice.

WE STAND ...FOR the free exercise of religion--
...AGAINST state intervention in the affairs, governance and hiring practices of churches and Christian organizations.

WE STAND ...FOR the sanctity of human life--
...AGAINST abortion, infanticide, euthanasia and the general eradication of the unique God-given dignity and worth of all human beings.

WE STAND ...FOR pursuing renewal through commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the infilling of the Holy Spirit for power, lives of sacrifice and separation from the sins of this world--
...AGAINST personal and structural injustice, whether it is religious, political, or economic.

WE STAND ...FOR the right to share our convictions and the gospel of Jesus Christ freely among all peoples--
...AGAINST any effort to deny individuals the right to adhere to and propagate the faith of their choice.

WE STAND ...FOR Christian education where the biblical view of our world and life is central--
...AGAINST education that is intolerant of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

WE STAND ...FOR government based on the equal rights of all citizens regardless of race, gender, or faith--
...AGAINST racism and anti-semitism anywhere, anytime.

WE STAND ...FOR strengthening marriage and the family as God's basic social unit--
...AGAINST the growing practice of divorce, premarital sex, extramarital sex and domestic abuse.

WE STAND ...FOR the pursuit of a pure and righteous life--
...AGAINST homosexuality, and lesbianism; incest; prostitution; pornography in all forms; drug and alcohol abuse; Satanism, humanism, and materialism.

WE STAND ...FOR a vigorous prophetic/redemptive witness by the church to the state on clearly moral issues--
...AGAINST politicizing the church or encouraging the church to speak beyond its area of competence.

WE STAND ...FOR a generous response to the needs of the oppressed, poor and hungry through acts of Christian compassion--
...AGAINST any "liberation theology" that advocates revolution and ideological subversion of the Bible and/or basic Christian doctrines to Marxist dictates.

WE STAND ...FOR the support of religious liberty around the globe, the legitimacy of all nations to provide for their national security and the non-violent resolution of international conflicts--

...AGAINST those voices on both the left and the right that would make churches and church organizations instruments of political activism with a primary commitment to a political ideology.

Having so declared we now give ourselves to the fulfillment of this declaration to the glory of God the Father. We do so convinced of His help, guided by the Holy Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23

XIII. SPIRITUAL WARFARE: THE CHRISTIAN AND DEMONS

The Bible frequently pictures the Christian life as a warfare. The principal antagonists are God and Satan; but men (as creatures created in God's image) and angels (both good and evil) are deeply and actively involved. Christians, as God's children by redemption, are the special objects of Satan's attacks.

Occult practices are as old as Satan's invasion of the Garden of Eden, but a renewed and alarming participation in them is evident in our contemporary, Western world. The spiritual vacuum created by powerless religion has provided fertile ground for such activities to flourish. This trend calls for a fresh look by the church at the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, whether we want to be or not.

The mention of angels and demons raises a special problem for most Western Christians, however, because spirits are not functional beings in the worldview of the typical Western Christian. While the reality of angels and demons may be affirmed as part of one's theological belief system, they are perceived as being confined largely to a supernatural realm with relatively infrequent contact with people on earth, especially Christian people. As science has provided explanations for many of the phenomena of life, the gap between the "spirit world" and the "real world" has become larger and larger. Significant segments of our society have given up a belief in spirit beings altogether, and the impact of this is seen in the secularization of society and the liberalization of theology.

On the other side of the spectrum are the peoples in the Two-thirds World whom we are commissioned to reach with the gospel and for whom spirits are very functional beings in everyday life. While they may ascribe more activity to spirits than they ought to, their worldview is often nearer to the worldview of the Bible than is ours.

Because of this worldview shift, not only are angels and demons not perceived as very real, neither is the Holy Spirit. Many Christians are more apt to control their emotions and modify their conduct in the presence of important people than in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Person and work of the Holy Spirit has become a source of great confusion in the church. There is a need to recognize a truly biblical view of the world in which spirits are functional beings. This is critical because Satan, supported by his host of fallen angels, is seeking to "devour" us (1 Pet. 5:8); and, if we do not recognize the enemy, we will not resist him effectively.

The Scriptures are unmistakable, however, in their teaching that this war was won decisively on our behalf by Christ at the cross (John 19:30, Col. 2:15, Heb. 2:14). Provision has been made for the Christian to "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). We have authority to "overcome all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). We can be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:35-39).

The Scriptures are also clear in their warnings and admonitions to God's people concerning relations with Satan, demons, and occult practices. In Old Testament times, Israel was told clearly that occult practices, practices which look to spiritual sources other than God for knowledge or power, were "detestable" to God (Deut. 18:9-13). Paul in 1 Cor. 10:20 gives insight on idolatry as practiced by the Gentiles when he says that behind the idols are demons.

In His time on earth, Jesus demonstrated how we are to do battle with the enemy, and the New Testament writers all include warnings concerning the attacks of Satan. Paul admonishes us to "take [our] stand against the devil's schemes" (Eph. 6:11). Peter commands us to "be self-controlled and alert: because our enemy the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). James tells us to "resist the devil" (Jas. 4:7). John cautions us, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

According to the Gospels, Jesus had much to say about Satan and demons, and a significant proportion of the record of His ministry is an account of His dealings with these enemies. Either Jesus was wrong in His belief in demons, or He was accommodating Himself to the wrong views of the people of that day, or He was right. Since He was right, there is no good reason to suppose that Satan and the demons

have changed their methods of operation significantly or that the power of God over them has changed. We are still to be on our guard against them and resist them, not ignore them.

Every provision has been made for Christians' protection if they use the armor (Eph. 6:10-18) and the weapons (e.g., prayer, the Bible, the blood, praise/worship) available to them. But, if they fail to do so or if they "give the devil a foothold" (Eph. 4:27), they are subject to demonic oppression.

The primary tactic of demons in seeking this control is deception. Satan used it on Eve (Gen. 3:1-7, 2 Cor. 11:3), and he has been using it ever since. Deception is clever lying, and the deceived person is unaware that he is acting on the basis of a lie. God's truth is the primary defense against such deception; hence the need for diligent Bible study. Discernment often comes through other Christians; hence the need for faithful participation in the life of the church.

Satan's ultimate objective is to deprive God of His glory. That, of course, is impossible. No one can add to or subtract from the glory of God. Satan can limit the degree to which God's glory is proclaimed and demonstrated on earth, however, by influencing God's children to live beneath their privileges in Christ and by hindering them in their witness and proclamation. The Christian who is not living all of life to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31) is to that extent fulfilling the purpose of Satan.

Satan's first approach is to create doubt about the character of God or the Word of God just as he did with Eve. He will also try to keep believers from growing in their knowledge of the Word and from living in obedience to it.

He will also try to create a thirst for power in some area of life or for knowledge about the future which causes them to turn to a source other than God or His Word to satisfy this thirst. Sometimes seemingly innocent experimentation or careless participation in questionable activities become openings to the occult.

Sometimes, however, Satan goes beyond that approach to a show of power. He uses attacks on the bodies and minds of people and demonstrations of his power over certain natural forces and objects to produce fear and bondage (Job 1-2). Satan knows that his power has been limited by God (Job 1:10, Luke 22:31, Rev. 12:12). He is unable to possess or exercise ownership over a Christian. He is, however, able to attack in other areas; and unless one knows how to resist him, he establishes a "foothold" from which to harass. Because he uses deception so effectively, these footholds are often not recognized or not identified for what they really are.

Demonic footholds are reclaimed by confession, repentance, renunciation (where occult activity may be involved), and cleansing through application of the merits of the blood of Christ. Sometimes demons must be commanded to leave in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every believer has access to the spiritual power necessary to resist the devil (or demons) and make him flee. Power to resist is not a gift; it is the privilege of every child of God. It is probable, however, that in any congregation there will be only a few who carry on a direct ministry to those who may be experiencing problems in this area.

The congregation, on the other hand, in its expression as the body of Christ, should be prepared to provide encouragement, support, and a base of accountability to those engaged in such ministries. It should also provide a healing community in which those going through deliverance or those rebuilding after deliverance may experience Christian love, receive strength, and find counsel.

The victory of Christ is to be manifest in the life of His people, however, not only in defense against Satan's attacks; it is also to be expressed as a vital element in the proclamation of the gospel to the unreached peoples of the world. The demonstration of spiritual power and authority in confronting demon forces among animistic people groups is an integral part of declaring the message of the kingdom of God and of planting the church where it has not yet been planted. Jesus demonstrated defensive tactics for Christians, as in His wilderness temptation (Luke 4:1-13). He also demonstrated offensive ministry strategy (Luke 4:31-44) and said that the works He did His followers would do also (John 14:12). His final commission was, "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

It may therefore be expected that confrontation with demonic forces will be more open and intense in those areas of the world where the church has not yet been planted. However, we should not be misled into thinking that similar open and intense spiritual warfare is not a present reality in the Western world.

Members of our church are therefore called upon to be diligent, in cultivating Christian disciplines, such as Bible study, prayer, mutual accountability, stewardship, public worship, fasting, and acts of mercy. These disciplines are means of appropriating the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:10-18 AV) for spiritual defense and mastering the "weapons of our warfare" (2 Cor. 10:3-5 AV) for effective ministry.

XIV. SECRET SOCIETIES

The Christian's supreme loyalty must be to Jesus Christ who is Lord (Romans 14:9; Acts 2:36). In all associations the Christian must be free to follow Christ, obey the will of God and should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). In light of biblical teachings, the Christian needs to understand the demands of discipleship regarding membership in secret societies.

Those organizations which demand a secret oath, affirmation, or password as a condition of membership are considered to be secret societies. Most secret societies are religious in nature. Frequently, prayers are offered, hymns are sung, members engage in acts of worship, and chaplains are chosen to lead in worship and to conduct funerals. However, the worship of these societies is often Unitarian, not Christian; the religion is moralistic, not redemptive; and the ends are humanistic, not evangelical (Acts 4:12). In contradiction to the teachings of Christ and the New Testament, these societies require secret pledges and vows which bind the future actions of those who join. Swearing unreserved loyalty to any secret society is in direct conflict with the Christian's commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. The Christian must be free to follow the will of the Lord in all things.

Therefore, members of our church shall refrain from membership in all secret societies and those who unite with the church must resign from membership in any lodge or secret order previously joined.

XV. EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

The intent of this position paper is to address euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is not intended to address every issue of human suffering related to death.

We believe that human life is a gift from God and has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition that everyone faces. Suffering that may precede death can be very grievous. It also affords the opportunity for personal reflection and reconciliation.

The ultimate test of our life's priorities may well be how we deal with suffering in the face of death. Such was the case for our Savior in the garden of Gethsemane. He was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Mark 14:34) and zealously prayed to be spared from suffering that would only intensify. At the same time, He affirmed His commitment to the larger purpose of the Father, whatever suffering that might involve. The absence of suffering is good, which is why Jesus prayed for it. At the same time, it is not the highest good, which is why He was willing to endure substantial suffering.

The Church opposes any intervention with the intent to produce death for relief of pain, suffering or economic consideration, or for the convenience of the patient, family or society. We believe that secular arguments for physician-assisted suicide are superseded by a biblical view of a sovereign God who places a limit on human autonomy. We further believe there is a profound moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and taking of a life on the other (Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17).

In order to affirm the dignity of human life, the Church advocates the development and use of adequate pain management to relieve suffering, provide human companionship and encourage spiritual support and intercessory prayer.

While for the believer to die is gain (Phil. 1:21), it is wrong to impose upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather, we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us until we meet Him face to face (1 John 3:2).

XVII. SANCTIFICATION

Introduction

To sanctify is to set apart for holy use, to separate out from the profane for the sacred (Hebrew, qadesh; Greek, hagiazo). As with justification, sanctification is the work of God. It is a work of grace based on the merit of Christ. Paul writes in Galatians 6:14, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Through the work of Christ, God separates the believer from sin for the purpose of holiness, which is accomplished as the believer follows after the Spirit putting to death the misdeeds of the body (See Romans 6:22; 8:1-14).

The entire Christian life depends on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13,14). Peter also wrote that we are "God's elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood" (1 Peter 1:1,2). What then is involved in this sanctifying work of the Spirit in the believers? The full breadth of that work includes two dimensions. The first is initial sanctification that is positional in Christ and occurs when a person receives Jesus Christ as Savior. The second is the experiential dimension that is expected and commanded of Christians. For example, note Paul's words in Philippians 2:12, "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." The moment one accepts Christ as Savior the believer dies to sin and becomes alive to holiness (Romans 6:2-4). Then Paul commands Christians to keep on counting themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). Christians should stop letting this age squeeze them into its mold but should continue permitting themselves to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24).

I. Initial Sanctification

To understand the full implication of what the work of sanctification includes, we must first appreciate the biblical truth involving our identification with Christ in His death on the cross. He not only died as our Redeemer, but He also died as our substitutionary Representative, paying the price for our sins. In Christ therefore, God sees every believer as being crucified with His Son and hence as a saint positionally sanctified in Him (Romans 6:6, 7; 1 Cor. 1:30, 6:11; Galatians 2:20). Paul writes that God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin on behalf of us in order that we ourselves might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The idea is that the Christian's position in the mind of God is that of a person who died with Christ and is positionally sanctified. In God's sight the Christian is viewed as never having sinned. Thus even the carnal Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1) could be truthfully called saints earlier in Paul's letter (1 Cor. 1:2). However, one cannot read the New Testament or observe the lives of some Christians without concluding that not every Christian who is indwelt by the Spirit is "filled with the Holy Spirit," that is, living according to His controlling leadership. It is a fact of the Bible that every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor.6:19,20) but not all are controlled by Him. (See Romans 7:14; Hebrews 5:11-6:12)

II. Experiential Sanctification

Positional sanctification, consequently, must be translated into one's own personal life experience by the help of the Holy Spirit via the Word of God (John 17:17). This is that to which Paul refers when he writes to the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." While this experiential dimension of sanctification begins at conversion, substantial progress in holiness occurs when a believer willfully makes a complete commitment to the Lord's control (Rom. 6:12,13; 12:1). Experiential sanctification involves three aspects.

A. The Decisive Aspect. The decisive aspect is commanded by Paul of the Roman Christians in Romans 6:12-13 and exhorted in 12:1. He describes this aspect as the presenting of one's bodily members to God by a determined effort of will. This placing of one's bodily members at God's disposal can begin at conversion, as it did for the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46). However, more often than not it begins with a resolute decision subsequent to salvation to make Christ Lord of every area of one's life. This decision usually follows a period of education and spiritual growth until one comes to realize that there is more to the Christian life than what has been experienced to that point in time. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said in Matthew 16:24 that, if anyone wished to come after Him as a disciple, he would have to deny himself and take up his cross, thus putting himself at God's disposal. Some call this decision "dedication," "consecration," or "a crisis experience." This is the point when, to the best of one's ability and with all the light available at the time, a person gives all of one's self and bodily members over to God's control and God then "baptizes" or "fills" the individual with His Spirit. (Compare Acts 1:5 and Acts 2:4.)

B. The Progressive Aspect. From then on, the progressive aspect of sanctification continues at a more rapid pace. In Romans 6:11 Paul commands the Christians to count themselves dead repeatedly to sinning of all kinds and alive unto God every time they are tempted to sin. In Romans 12:2, believers are to stop letting this age conform them into its likeness and they are to continue letting the Lord transform their living by the renewing of their minds. As Jesus stated in Matthew 16:24, they are to continue following and obeying Him and His teachings. The intent is that the longer we live this progressively holy life, the more our lives will become conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ, God's Son (Rom. 8:29). We are to continue being filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

The Spirit-filled life is a life lived under the control of the Holy Spirit using the Bible as one's guide. This does not mean that a Spirit-filled Christian will never yield to temptation and sin. However, if one should sin, confession should be made immediately and personal forgiveness accepted by faith (1 John 1:9-2:2). It is to be remembered that the fruit of the Spirit does not come automatically

to people still involved with sin dwelling in their members (Rom. 7:14-25). The fullness of the Spirit does not make obedience to God an automatic thing nor the demonstration of the fruit of the Spirit something easy to exhibit on all occasions. However, this does not mean that the ideal should not be one's aim. New circumstances may call for renewed dedication of one's body to God as a living sacrifice when the Spirit leads and as the Christian matures in Christ. All of this involves lifelong growth and development in Christ-likeness through the continual sanctifying work of the Spirit by the truth of His Word (John 17:17).

C. The Completed Aspect. Finally, the sanctifying work of the Spirit is completed in one sense at the time of physical death when the spirit of the Christian enters into the Lord's presence (Heb. 12:22, 23). However, sanctification will be completed in the final sense when the Christian's body is resurrected and glorified (1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20,21; 1 John 3:2). Then the believer will attain complete sanctification for all eternity.

Summary

To reiterate, the Holy Spirit enters and indwells the life of an individual at his/her conversion, and sainthood begins positionally (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19,20). The Spirit takes over control in many Christians' lives in a decisive moment of sanctification when that Christian permits the Spirit total control. From then on the indwelt and controlled Christian is expected to continue walking according to the Spirit's leading via God's Word, the Bible (John 17:17). This filling or controlling is something that is intended to continue in the sanctified Christian's life (Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 7:1) until it is completed in one sense at the Christian's death (Heb. 12:22,23) and in the final sense at Christ's return when the Christian receives a resurrection body (Phil. 3:12-14, 20, 21).