

Family Community Church Doctrine Handbook

FAITH & MESSAGE AND OFFICAL STATEMENTS

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FAITH & MESSAGE

FAMILY COMMUNITY CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH & MESSAGE

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men who were divinely influenced. The Holy Bible is God explaining Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine teaching. God is the author. Salvation is its purpose. Truth, without any mistakes, is its substance. For these reasons, all Scripture is completely true. All Scripture is completely correct. It tells the main beliefs that God uses to judge us. It is the true center of Christianity. It will remain the center of Christianity until the end of the world. It is the most excellent ideal. It is with this ideal that all human behavior, all statements of belief, and all religious opinions should be tested. All Scripture is proof of Christ. Christ is the center of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10, 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16, 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16, 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18, 22:29; Luke 21:33, 24:44-46; John 5:39, 16:13-15, 17:17; Acts 2:16ff., 17:11; Romans 15:4, 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2, 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being. He is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is never-ending in purity. God is perfect. God is all powerful. God is all knowing. He knows about all things in the past, present, and future. He knows about all of the future decisions that His free created beings will make. To Him we owe the highest love, respect, and obedience. The never-ending God shows Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three have separate personal characteristics though there is no difference in their nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father rules with kind care over His universe, His creatures, and human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful. He is all knowing. He is all loving. He is all wise. God is Father to people who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1, 2:7; Exodus 3:14, 6:2-3; 15:11ff., 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4, 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10, 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff., 7:11, 23:9, 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24, 5:26, 14:6-13, 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6, 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the never-ending Son of God. In His life as Jesus Christ, He was brought into being by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus completely showed and did the will of God. He became a human being with all the stress and needs of human beings. He identified

completely with humans. Even though He was human, He had no sin. He respected the divine law. He personally obeyed God. When He died for others on the cross, He made a way for the salvation of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body. He appeared to His disciples. They knew that He was the person who was with them before His death on the cross. He went up into heaven. He is now honored at the right hand of God. He is the One Mediator. He is completely God. He is completely man. In Him are God and man brought together. He will return in power and majesty to judge the world. When He returns, He will complete His work of salvation. He now lives in all believers as the living and always present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff., 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14, 53; Matthew 1:18-23, 3:17, 8:29, 11:27, 14:33, 16:16,27; 17:5, 27, 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1, 3:11; Luke 1:35, 4:41, 22:70, 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38, 11:25-27, 12:44-50, 14:7-11, 16:15-16,28, 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9, 2:22-24, 7:55-56, 9:4-5,20, Romans 1:3-4, 3:23-26, 5:6-21, 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 2:2, 8:6, 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20, 3:11, 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22, 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6, 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3, 4:14-15, 7:14-28, 9:12-15,24-28, 12:2, 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25, 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9, 3:2, 4:14-15, 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16, 5:9-14, 12:10-11, 13:8, 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is completely divine. He influenced holy men of Bible times to write the Scriptures. By explanation He allows men to understand truth. He honors Christ. He shows men their sin. He shows men the worthiness of Christ. He shows men their punishment. He calls men to the Saviour. He is the source of rebirth. At the moment of rebirth, He takes every believer into the Body of Christ. He grows believers into mature Christians. He comforts believers. He gives the spiritual gifts to believers. With these gifts, believers can serve God through His church. He keeps the believer safe until the day of the last salvation. His presence in the Christian is the promise that God will make the believer completely like Christ. He explains and gives power to the believer and to the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11, 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18, 3:16, 4:1, 12:28-32, 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35, 4:1,18-19, 11:13, 12:12, 24:49; John 4:24, 14:16-17,26, 15:26, 16:7-14; Acts 1:8, 2:1-4,38; 4:31, 5:3, 6:3, 7:55, 8:17,39, 10:44, 13:2, 15:28, 16:6, 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14, 3:16, 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30, 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16, 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14, 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13, 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10, 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God. Man is made in God's likeness. God created them as male and female. They are the greatest work of His creation. Being made male or female by God is a part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin. He was given the gift of freedom of choice by his Creator. By his free choice man sinned against God. Man brought sin into all people in the entire world. Through the temptation of

Satan, man disobeyed the command of God. He lost his original innocence. Now all men inherit a life and a background willing to sin. As a result, as soon as they are able to make right decisions and actions, they become sinners. They are guilty of sin. Only the kindness of God can bring man into His holy fellowship. Only the kindness of God can let man complete the creative purpose of God. The godliness of all people is obvious, because God made man in His own likeness. The godliness of all people is obvious, because Christ died for all men. Now every person of every race should receive respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30, 2:5,7,18-22, 3, 9:6; Psalms 1, 8:3-6, 32:1-5, 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32, 3:10-18,23, 5:6,12,19, 6:6, 7:14-25, 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31, 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22, 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation includes the whole man. Salvation is given to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Jesus Christ by His own blood brought never-ending salvation to the believer. Salvation includes being accepted just as you are when you turn from your sin. Salvation includes being set apart for His work. Salvation includes being made to worship God. There is no salvation without personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's kindness. Believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart created by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit shows us our sin. The sinner begins by turning from sin and turning to God. The sinner has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Turning from sin and turning to God and faith are experiences of God's kindness that are never separated. Repentance is a real turning from sin to God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the whole person to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's kind and complete pardon from sin of all sinners because of His righteousness. All sinners must turn from their sin and turn to God. All sinners must believe in Christ to receive justification. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and approval with God.

C. Sanctification is the way a believer is set apart for God's purposes. Sanctification begins with new birth. The believer grows toward moral and spiritual maturity. The believer grows because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit living in him. Growth should continue throughout the believer's life.

D. Glorification is the result of salvation. Glorification is the last blessed condition of the believer. This condition never ends for the believer as he worships God forever in heaven.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17, 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21, 4:17, 16:21-26, 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69, 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29, 3:3-21,36, 5:24, 10:9,28-29, 15:1-16, 17:17; Acts 2:21, 4:12, 15:11, 16:30-31, 17:30-31, 20:32; Romans 1:16-18, 2:4, 3:23-25, 4:3ff., 5:8-10, 6:1-23, 8:1-18,29-39, 10:9-10,13, 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30, 6:19-20, 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20, 3:13, 5:22-25, 6:15; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-22, 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13, Colossians 1:9-22, 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews

2:1-3, 5:8-9, 9:24-28, 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20, 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Becoming one of God's children is the caring work of God. He accepts us just as we are. He sets us apart for His work. He wants us to be with Him and to worship Him forever. God's kind plan does not deny the free will of man. God's plan includes all the ways to accomplish this. God's plan is the great evidence of God's most excellent goodness. God's plan is very wise, holy, and cannot be changed. God's plan does not include boasting. God's plan encourages humility. All true believers continue forever. Believers that God has accepted in Christ and set apart for His work by His Spirit will never lose their salvation. They shall continue forever. Believers may sin because of neglect and temptation. Believers grieve the Spirit because they sin. Believers damage their graces and comforts because of sin. Believers bring criticism on the cause of Christ because of sin. Believers bring worldly judgments on themselves because of sin. Even though they may sin, true believers will still be saved by the power of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19, 21:28-45, 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79, 2:29-32, 19:41-44, 24:44-48; John 1:12-14, 3:16, 5:24, 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29, 15:16, 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10, 8:28-39, 10:12-15, 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10, 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12, 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9, 2:19, 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an independent local congregation of baptized believers. These believers are joined by shared agreement. These believers share in the same faith and fellowship of the gospel. This group of baptized believers observes the two ordinances of Christ. They are guided by His laws. They use the gifts, rights, and privileges given to them by His Word. They are trying to present the gospel to all people on the earth. Each congregation works under the Lordship of Christ by self-governing methods. In this kind of congregation, each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. The church's scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. Both men and women are given gifts by the Holy Spirit for service in the church. The office of pastor is limited to men that meet the qualifications found in Scripture. The New Testament describes the church as the Body of Christ. This church includes all of the believers from throughout history. These believers come from every people group. They come from every language group. They come from all people from every country.

Matthew 16:15-19, 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14, 6:3-6, 13:1-3, 14:23,27; 15:1-30, 16:5, 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 3:16, 5:4-5, 7:17, 9:13-14, 12; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 3:8-11,21, 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14, 3:1-15, 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3, 21:2-3.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience. Baptism is the picture of the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour. Baptism is a picture of the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in a new life in Christ Jesus. Baptism shows the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Baptism is required before church membership. Baptism is also required before taking the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a picture of obedience. Church members eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine. They remember the death of the Redeemer. They look forward to His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17, 26:26-30, 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11, 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22, 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42, 8:35-39, 16:30-33, 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21, 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian custom to recognize this day regularly. On this day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This day should include worship and spiritual commitment, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should agree with the Christian's sense of right and wrong under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12, 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28, 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24, 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16, 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes His general rule over the universe. The Kingdom of God also includes His rule over men. These men of their own free will accept Him as King. The Kingdom is the area of salvation. Men receive this salvation by having trust like a child and making a commitment like a child to Jesus Christ. Christians should pray and work so that the Kingdom of God may come. Christians should pray and work so that God's will may be done on earth. The Kingdom of God will be complete when Jesus Christ returns to earth again at the end of this time.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2, 4:8-10,23, 12:25-28, 13:1-52, 25:31-46, 26:29; Mark 1:14-15, 9:1; Luke 4:43, 8:1, 9:2, 12:31-32, 17:20-21, 23:42; John 3:3, 18:36; Acts 1:6-7, 17:22-31; Romans 5:17, 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10, 11:15, and 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its right end. In keeping with His promise, Jesus Christ will return to earth in person. He will be seen in all His

greatness by all people on the earth. The dead will be raised. Christ will judge all men with honesty. The unworthy will be sent to Hell, the place of never-ending punishment. The worthy, in their resurrected and glorified bodies, will receive their reward. They will live forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4, 11:9; Matthew 16:27, 18:8-9, 19:28, 24:27,30,36,44, 25:31-46, 26:64; Mark 8:38, 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26, 17:22-3, 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11, 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5, 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5, 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff., 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28, 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18, 3:11, 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the job and honor of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to try to make disciples of the people from all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Winning the lost world to faith in Jesus Christ depends on all believers. Making disciples is a Christian duty for the person who has already accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Making disciples is clearly commanded many times in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to try always to win the lost to Christ by a spoken witness. The child of God should also present a Christian way of life. The methods used to witness should be in agreement with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38, 10:5-15, 13:18-30, 37-43, 16:19, 22:9-10, 24:14, 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18, 24:46-53; John 14:11-12, 15:7-8,16, 17:15, 20:21; Acts 1:8, 2, 8:26-40, 10:42-48, 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3, 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of explanation and intelligence. In Jesus Christ are all the riches of understanding and learning. All good learning is a part of our Christian history. The new birth opens all human abilities. The new birth creates a desire for learning. The reason for education in the Kingdom of Christ is brought together with missions and general kindness to others. These should receive the generous support of the churches. A system of Christian education is necessary for a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. In Christian education, there should be a good balance between educational freedom and educational responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always incomplete and never final. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is controlled by the authority of Jesus Christ. The teacher is controlled by the power of the Scriptures. The teacher is controlled by the obvious purpose for which the school was started and continues.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14, 6:1-10, 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff., 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff., 4:1-10, 8:1-7,11, 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff., 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5, 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the giver of all earthly and heavenly blessings. God is the giver of all that we have and all that we are. Christians have a spiritual responsibility to the whole world. Christians have a responsibility to share the gospel. Christians have a duty to be good managers of their possessions. They have the responsibility to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions. Christians should know that all of these are given to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. The Scriptures say that Christians should give a percentage of their income cheerfully, regularly, carefully, and generously. Christians should give for the progress of the Redeemer's plan on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21, 23:23, 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47, 5:1-11, 17:24-25, 20:35; Romans 6:6-22, 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6:19-20, 12, 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9, 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as time requires, plan associations and conventions that will best get cooperation for the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no power over one another or over the churches. These organizations are voluntary. They are to make suggestions planned to get, to join, and to direct the interests of our people in the most successful way. Members of New Testament churches should help each other to spread the missionary, educational, and kind ministries of Christ's Kingdom. This should be done together to add to Christ's Kingdom. The meaning of Christian unity in the New Testament is spiritual agreement and voluntary help by many groups of Christ's people to reach a common purpose. Cooperation is wanted between the many Christian denominations when the purpose is right. Cooperation is wanted when there is no ignoring of the sense of right and wrong. Cooperation is wanted when there is no giving up of loyalty to Christ and His Word as explained in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12, 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4, 2:68-69, 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4, 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15, 20:1-16, 22:1-10, 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14, 2:1ff., 4:31-37, 13:2-3, 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians have a responsibility to try to make the will of Christ first in our own lives and in the world. The ways and methods used to improve society and to create righteousness among men can be very helpful. These changes are helpful only if they come because of the rebirth of the person by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. Just like Christ, Christians should be against racial discrimination, every form of greed, self-interest, and evil, and all forms of sexual wrongdoing, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for orphans, the poor, the abused, the old, the weak, and the sick. We should speak for the unborn. We should insist on the holiness of all human life from its creation to natural death. Every Christian should try to bring business, government, and all people under the influence of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. To do this Christians

should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause. Christians should always be careful to act in love without giving up their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12, 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48, 22:36-40, 25:35; Mark 1:29-34, 2:3ff., 10:21; Luke 4:18-21, 10:27-37, 20:25, John 15:12, 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, 6:1-7, 7:20-24, 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to try to find peace with all men. In keeping with the character and teachings of Christ, Christians should do everything they can to put an end to war. The true solution for war is the gospel of our Lord. The first need of the world is to accept His teachings in all the actions of men and nations. The world needs to apply His law of love to everything they do. Christian people all over the world should pray for the time to come when the Prince of Peace will be in control.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9, 38-48, 6:33, 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Romans 12:18-19, 13:1-7, 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of what is right and wrong. Man's sense of what is right and wrong is free from the rules and commandments of the Lord. These rules and commandments may be different from His Word. They may not be found in His Word. Church and state should be separate. The state owes protection to every church. The state owes complete freedom to every church in seeking spiritual matters. In giving this freedom, no religious group or denomination should be given any special treatment by the state. The national government was planned by God. It is the duty of Christians to give faithful obedience in all things that are not against the known will of God. The church should not expect the national government to do its work. The gospel of Christ considers only spiritual methods to reach its purposes. The state has no right to require punishment for religious beliefs of any kind. The state has no right to require taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal. This suggests the right of free communication with God by all men. This also suggests the right to start and spread religious opinions without trouble from the government.

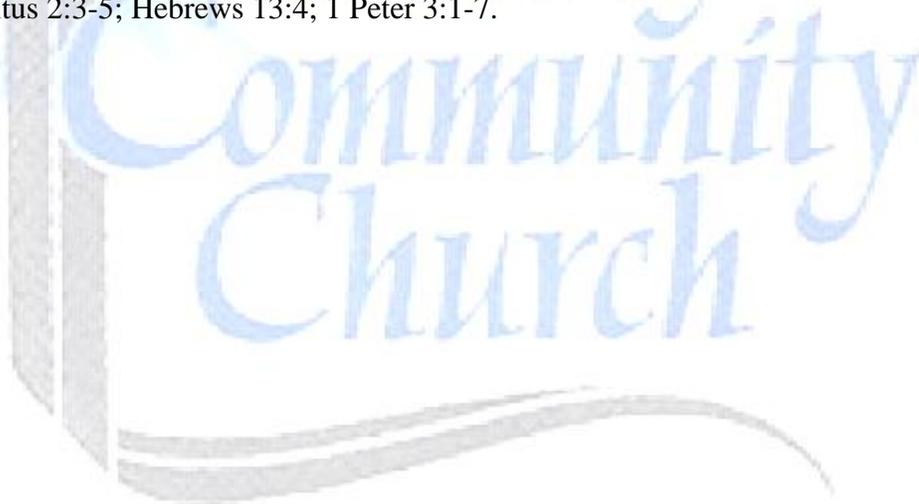
Genesis 1:27, 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24, 16:26, 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2, 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17, 3:11-17, 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has planned the family as the first institution of the world. It is made up of persons joined to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman with the promise of being faithful to one another for a lifetime. Marriage is God's special gift. Marriage shows the union between Christ and His church. Marriage gives the man and the woman the way for intimate friendship. Marriage is the way of sexual

expression according to the main beliefs in the Bible. Marriage is the way for increasing of the human race. The husband and wife are of the same worth before God. Both are created in God's likeness. The marriage relationship shows the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given duty to provide for, to protect, and to guide his family. A wife is to submit herself with kindness to the servant leadership of her husband. A wife submits just as the church willingly submits to the leadership of Christ. She is made in the likeness of God. Her husband is also made in the likeness of God. This makes the wife and husband equals. She has the God-given duty to respect her husband. She is to serve as his helper in running the household and supporting the next generation. Children, from the moment of creation, are a blessing and inheritance from the Lord. Parents are to show to their children God's example for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and right values. Parents are to guide their children to make choices based on truths in the Bible. Parents are to guide their children by living a life faithful to God. Parents are to guide their children with loving discipline. Children are to respect and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-25, 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5, 78:1-8, 127, 128, 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8, 5:15-20, 6:20-22, 12:4, 13:24, 14:1, 17:6, 18:22, 22:6,15, 23:13-14, 24:3, 29:15,17, 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32, 18:2-5, 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.





Official Statements

These official statements, adopted by Family Community Church are expressions of conscience outside the parameters of the church constitution, bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Covenants of Ethics.

ABORTION

We affirm our position that the moral issue of abortion is more than a question of the freedom of a woman to control the reproductive functions of her own body. It is rather a question of whether a human being may be permitted to take the life of another. We believe all life is a gift of God, so neither the life of the unborn child nor the mother may be lightly taken. We believe God Himself in Scripture has told us what our attitude should be towards the unborn. Several times it is specifically stated He conferred divine blessing upon unborn infants. (Psalm 139:13, 16; Luke 1:31-33, 41.) He also provided penalties for actions resulting in the death of the unborn.

Therefore we deplore in the strongest possible terms the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court to make it legal to terminate a pregnancy.

We believe the cause of morality is not furthered by men's attempts to undermine God's authority by speculating with their own finite minds on what circumstances might justify the killing of an unborn child.

In the extreme case where the life of the unborn child threatens the life of the mother, we reaffirm the doctor has two patients and should try to save both lives if at all possible.

AIDS/HIV

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the most serious public-health problem in the world. In this decade, tens of thousands of Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million Americans are carriers of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). For those who have contracted AIDS, there is currently no known medical cure. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results for those who are carriers of HIV. The Surgeon General of the United States has called AIDS the most serious matter any health official of any nation has ever faced.

Although there is the urgent need for education regarding AIDS, education without reference to values ignores the moral dimensions of the problem. Government or private sector programs that deny the moral element of this problem are inadequate remedies. While there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains the two primary groups of individuals infected with the HIV are practicing, homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles. The link between immoral behavior and the spread of AIDS is self-evident.

Furthermore AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special "civil rights" on persons infected with HIV is unacceptable. We believe appropriate legislation regarding this epidemic would require testing as a requirement for marriage licenses, testing of high risk groups, reporting of those with the disease to public health officials on the same basis as other sexually transmitted diseases, and closing facilities that encourage promiscuous, sexual activity.

But legislation and the best efforts of public health officials have their limits. Our Christian faith offers hope for those who have tested positive for the virus and a realistic way of life to curb the tragic spread of this virus by practicing chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage. Family Community Church calls upon churches to proclaim the hope God has provided in Jesus Christ and to promote the practice of biblical, sexual morality. We encourage pastors to request couples coming to them for marriage to consider HIV screening and to share the results with each other before marriage. With Christian compassion we offer the hope of Christ's redemption, grace, and healing power to victims of AIDS. We cannot permit fear or apathy to keep us from bringing the life-changing resources of our Christian faith and love to those who suffer from this dreadful disease.

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

The historic position of Family Community Church concerning the use of alcohol and tobacco has been one of abstinence. We hereby publicly reaffirm that position with regard to Family Community Church.

Reasons:

1. National studies on drug abuse conclude alcohol and tobacco are the two greatest drug abuse problems in the United States.

- A. The potential social and health hazards of each are commonly accepted among the American public;
- B. Both are generally perceived as associated with a permissive lifestyle not most becoming for a Christian;
- C. Appearance is a valid, biblical factor for consideration (1 Thessalonians 5:22); and

- D. Example must be sensitively set by believers (Romans 14).
2. There are strong, scriptural injunctions against the use of alcoholic beverage. (Proverbs 23:31-32, 20:1, 31:4-5.) These passages weigh heavily against biblical teaching on moderation (Philippians 4:5) or alcohol for medicinal use (1 Timothy 5:23), which also implies Timothy had conscientiously chosen the position of abstinence. Also to be considered are the options available to us as compared to our biblical counterparts.
 3. 2 Corinthians 7:1 is certainly applicable to tobacco.
 4. Habits or practices that have the potential to dominate and control are best avoided (1 Corinthians 6:12).
 5. The biblical instruction to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) speaks loudly to us in light of the serious problems we are having with alcohol and tobacco in America. We believe our Christian testimony is best served by a position of abstinence regarding the use of alcohol and tobacco.

CREATIONISM

Whereas evolution is a theory based on a great deal of speculation, and Whereas creationism based on scientific concepts offers a viable alternative about the subject of origins, and Whereas public education is designed to present available information and stimulate inquiry, and Whereas there are numerous resource materials (books, films, filmstrips, tapes) available on the scientific concepts of "The Creation Model,"

Be it resolved the Family Community Church goes on record this 7th day of November 2012, to strongly support and urge local school districts to provide material based on the scientific concepts of creationism in their resource libraries and to teach these concepts in the classroom.

GAMBLING

Gambling is a parasite feeding on both the individual and society. Unhealthy behavior patterns are developed by people who gamble. The "thrill" element in gambling produces an unrealistic view of life and a distorted concept of personal responsibilities. Gambling has a destructive effect on the moral fabric of society because of its "something for nothing" philosophy.

The ruse of promoting gambling and lotteries for the purpose of subsidizing education is an attempt to gain respectability and acceptance as an honorable and productive business. However this has by actual experience proven costly to the public. The contribution to the purported cause has been minimal in proportion to the cost of promotion and administration of the enterprise. In addition, the fringe dangers of graft, subterfuge, and infiltration by the criminal element make such a program suspect.

Family Community Church believes principle, public programs and projects should be publicly supported and opposes legalized lotteries and oppose the weakening of laws to permit state-sponsored gambling.

Family Community Church supports a program of education regarding the evils of gambling by both the church and other community agencies and encourages law enforcement agencies on local, state, and national levels in carrying out their responsibilities regarding the control of gambling.

HOMOSEXUALITY

One of the byproducts of the increasing mood of permissiveness in our society is a growing awareness of a community not previously recognized, namely the practicing homosexuals in our midst. Whether the result of moral looseness, social instability, or physiological change, the number of homosexuals seems to be increasing. The Bible speaks out strongly in condemnation of sin and unrighteousness in all forms. The Scriptures explicitly pronounce judgment on sexual deviance. The first chapter of Romans refers to the guilt of mankind expressed in shameful worship, perverted passions, and corrupted minds.

Nevertheless we must remember all men regardless of their offenses need God's love as manifest in Jesus Christ. All too often we have both overtly and covertly rejected the person of the sexual deviant.

Therefore we resolve as Family Community Church:

1. To stand firm in the belief the Holy Scriptures condemn practicing homosexuality and give no basis for approving this as an acceptable lifestyle; and
2. To extend the healing ministry of the entire, Christian community to individuals who seek forgiveness and deliverance from the sin of homosexuality.

LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY

Organization, leadership, and authority are common threads woven throughout God's creation – the animal kingdom, the human kingdom, and the spiritual kingdom – whether it be the human body, the nuclear family, the local church, civil government, or God's eternal Kingdom. Leadership authority is necessary to good order, smooth function, and accomplishment. The alternative is disorder, chaos, anarchy

All authority begins with God. Leadership with delegated authority is God-ordained. "Let ... man ... rule over the fish ... the birds ... the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures ..." (Genesis 1:26). This Godly order is evident in earthly relationships: husband/wife, parent/child, leader/community, leader/church, employer/employee.

Leadership authority, especially within the church, falls into two primary categories – **positional authority** and **spiritual authority**.

POSITIONAL AUTHORITY

There is a parental authority within the family God expects children to recognize on the basis of position. "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother" (Ephesians 6:1-2). While there is a qualification with the word obey, there is no qualification with the word honor. You honor your parents because they are your parents – not because they are Christians, wise and good. Full respect for your parents is a separate consideration and one that must be earned. However the latter does not negate the former.

The same is true of government position. "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves" (Romans 13:1-2). We are also instructed to pray for leaders (1 Timothy 2:2).

Similarly in the church: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account" (Hebrews 13:17).

There is an authority, although limited, that goes with a leadership position. Voluntary submission to this authority "as unto the Lord" brings blessing. (Ephesians 6:2; Colossians 3:18-25.) Disrespect of it brings judgment. (Leviticus 20:9; Numbers 12, 14, 16; 1 Samuel 15:23, 24:6; Romans 13:2.) Submission to God-ordained leadership honors God. There is a place for the exercise of conscience and conviction (Daniel 3, 6; Acts 5:29), but not used as a loophole.

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

In addition to positional authority, there is a spiritual leadership authority based upon one's spiritual gift, one's walk with God, one's anointing, integrity, faith, obedience, and servant attitude. This leader has a following built upon trust, consistency, competence, and results. Followers recognize the gifts of God in the servant of God and voluntarily respond. This spiritual authority is not in conflict with positional authority. Ideally they complement each other.

Important to the progress of Family Community Church is an understanding and application of the biblical principle of authority. May our response enhance God's blessing upon our movement.

Foundations of Marriage and Family

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND FAMILY

Marriage and family are foundational to the structure of society. The security of children, the emotional and physical health of adults, and even the condition of the workplace are connected to the presence of healthy marriages and families. Therefore protecting and nurturing marriages and families is of the highest importance.

We believe marriage is God given and sacred. It is a holy union between one man and one woman in which they covenant with one another and with God to build a loving, faithful, and lifetime relationship until separated by death. (Genesis 2:18, 22-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9.)

Marriage is good and designed by God for the purpose of companionship and producing offspring (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18).

Christians are not to be unequally yoked in marriage to a non-Christian (2 Corinthians 6:14).

A healthy, Christian marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children. The husband and the wife both share in the joy of giving birth to children within the sphere of their love. By God's grace they will be enabled to raise godly children who reflect Him in morals, attitudes, conduct of life, and in contributing

to society. The parents' love, teaching, and example will be amplified by succeeding generations and is the foundation of a strong, generational legacy. (Genesis 17:7; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6; Isaiah 59:21; Colossians 3:18-21.)

God has clearly outlined His structure for a godly family in His Word. Strong, godly families are a living testimony of a loving God. They reflect the relationship between God and His church. These families serve as a witness and an invitation for salvation in Jesus Christ to those from godless or dysfunctional homes. (Luke 1:17; Ephesians 5:22-33, 6:1-4.)

We believe biblical principles of marriage and family should be seriously taught in our homes, churches, schools, and Bible Colleges. Education on these subjects must begin at an early age and continue long after marriage. The educational process will strengthen our efforts and help make our beliefs in this area a top priority. (Deuteronomy 11:18-21; Titus 2:1-7.)

Divorce

Divorce breaks the God-ordained covenant between a man, woman, and God and destroys and distorts the reflection of the image of Christ to the Church and to the world. (Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:11.)

Although Moses was allowed to grant and regulate divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts, the biblical reality is God hates divorce. Nonetheless it should be clearly understood God does not hate divorced people. A divorced person does not become a second-class citizen in God's kingdom. (Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:7-8.)

Despite God's clearly stated preference for marriage and family and against divorce, His word speaks to occasions when divorce is permissible. The first is in the case of the adultery of a spouse (Matthew 5:32). The second is where an unbelieving spouse, of his or her own accord, deserts the believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:14-15). In addition, we believe divorce prior to salvation is covered by Jesus' blood and grace (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Because anyone who divorces his or her spouse without biblical grounds and then remarries commits adultery and anyone who marries a wrongfully divorced person commits adultery, the church must be careful not to accommodate divorce situations not enumerated in Scripture. (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3.)

Remarriage

Anyone who divorces his or her spouse without biblical grounds and remarries commits adultery. Anyone who marries a wrongfully divorced person commits adultery. (Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18.) There are occasions, however, when remarriage is acceptable.

1. Widows may remarry and are encouraged to do so. (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:8, 9-39; 1 Timothy 5:14)
2. Those whose spouse has been unfaithful may remarry. (Matthew 5:31-32, Romans 7:2-4);
3. Those whose unbelieving spouse end a marriage may remarry (1 Corinthians 7:15); and
4. Those who were divorced prior to salvation may remarry. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:1-8.)

Abuse

Family Community Church does not condone physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or any other type of abuse against a spouse, a child, or a parent within a marriage and family. Ephesians 5:22-6:4 presents the biblical picture of marriage and family. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. There is no excuse for abuse by a husband against his wife. In a similar fashion, there is no excuse for a wife to abuse her husband. Fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath. There is no excuse for abuse from a parent to a child. Children are to obey their parents. There is no excuse for abuse from a child to a parent. A wife, husband, parent, or child who finds him or herself in an abusive situation is not required to remain at the risk of injury to life, soul, or spirit. Legal remedies are available to persons who are abused, and all such legal remedies should be utilized in the pursuit of safety.

Since Scripture gives no absolute statement about divorce and remarriage if physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse has entered the marriage or family relationship, issues of separation, divorce, and remarriage should be prayerfully considered with the aide of pastors, counselors, and local law officials.

NON-TRINITARIANS

Several groups who hold non-Trinitarian religious beliefs are attempting to thrust themselves into the arena in which evangelical pastors and chaplains minister.

The Statement of Faith of Family Community Church states God is present in the Eternal Godhead; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Any requirement to jointly lead worship services with those who hold non-Trinitarian beliefs is contrary to the Statement of Faith.

Therefore Family Community Church strongly supports any pastor or chaplain who chooses not to participate in the communal conduct of worship with non-Trinitarian, worship leaders. In areas of ministry apart from worship a pastor or chaplain is free, as his or her conscience directs, to cooperate with other leaders to enhance the religious life of the community.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

Physician-assisted suicide is one of the profound ethical issues confronting America today. With moral relativism directing a quality of life ethic, physician-assisted suicide is being advocated as a "right." It is even being suggested the lives of some people are not worth living and they should be encouraged, for their own sake and that of their family- or society, to end their lives.

The primary legal issue is whether the so-called "right to die" should be considered a liberty interest protected under Section 1 of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Subsidiary legal arguments supporting physician-assisted suicide revolve around alleviating severe pain and exercising personal autonomy. However the underlying moral issue is far more profound. This matter of life and death involves our relationship with one another on the human level and the relationship of each of us with God.

We believe life is a gift from God, and human life has absolute, not relative, value. Death is a significant transition we all face. The physical and emotional suffering that may precede death can be very grievous, but it may also spiritually enrich us and afford a last opportunity for reconciliation with friends, family, and God. While we firmly believe in mercy and compassion, that belief does not give anyone license to play God. We believe there is a profound, moral distinction between allowing a person to die, on the one hand, and killing, on the other (Deuteronomy 5:17). We affirm the ethic "always to care, never to kill."

We pray earnestly the Supreme Court of the USA will not attempt to interpret the constitution as giving a right to physician-assisted suicide. We also pray the Court will not leave this matter to the states, which would mean each state would be free to pass legislation permitting doctors to end the lives of their patients under certain circumstances. As evangelicals we deny there are any circumstances that justify euthanasia, with or without consent.

We recognize the pressing need to alleviate the severe pain that may precede death. Medical experts say ninety-nine percent of such pain can be adequately managed, yet twenty-five percent of those with pain do not benefit from medical treatment to satisfactorily alleviate the pain. We appeal to the medical profession to do all in its power to close the gap between the knowledge of how to cope with pain therapeutically and the application of that knowledge to anyone needlessly suffering pain.

While for the Christian to die is gain, it is wrong to intrude upon God's prerogative by advancing that day. Rather we look to our Lord Jesus Christ to sustain us.

RACISM

BELIEVING the Holy Scriptures ascribe the creation of all humankind to our Heavenly Father; **RECOGNIZING** both Old and New Testaments reveal God's love for every individual;

AFFIRMING our Lord Jesus Christ through His works and acts continually demonstrated acceptance, compassion, and salvation for each human being regardless of race, gender, age, position, or circumstances; and **PROCLAIMING** God is not willing any should perish but all should come to repentance;

FAMILY COMMUNITY CHURCH is committed to the message of reconciliation through the cross and unity in the power of the Holy Spirit that became a reality on the Day of Pentecost.

We Believe:

Racism in all its forms, personal and systemic, is sinful and to be resisted by the Body of Christ;

Every member in the Body of Christ must speak boldly, act resolutely, and stand firmly against racism; and

The Church must strive together in the unity of the Spirit so no person is discredited, devalued, or disregarded but be treated with dignity and respect and, valued as an eternal soul for whom Christ died and rose again.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

The history of the New Testament Church movement and of Family Community Church (FCC) is replete with anointed women called to serve Christ and the Church. The practical expression of that history in FCC bears witness to the fact God honors the public ministry and leadership of women. Many dynamic women, both single and married, have contributed significantly to the growth and development of FCC.

The Old Testament consistently endorses the ministry and leadership of women. It emphasizes the wives of patriarchs as mothers in Israel, includes women in genealogies, tells the stories of Debra, Abigail, Ruth, and Esther, and records the ministries of women prophets such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and Noadiah (Nehemiah 6:14). The Old Testament prophecy of Joel clearly indicates there is no distinction between male and female in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days (Joel 2:28-29).

The New Testament continues the affirmation of the ministry and leadership of women. Jesus publicly affirmed the Samaritan woman in John 4, accepted the gifts of Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and other women who “ministered unto Him of their substance” (Luke 8:2-3), affirmed the prophetic ministry of Mary of Bethany (John 12:1-7), and appeared first to a woman after his death, who became the first witness of the resurrection (Mark 16:9-10). Dorcas and Lydia were models of women in ministry (Acts 9:36, 16:14), and there is strong evidence Junia, who was “of note among the apostles” (Romans 16:7). Women such as Euodias and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2) were instrumental in Paul’s successful ministry as a missionary to the Gentiles.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit both on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and on the Church in the twentieth century has demonstrated God is no respecter of persons in regard to gender, and the apostle Paul clearly declared in Christ Jesus “there is neither male or female” (Galatians 3:26-28). Biblical interpretation and the history of the Church reveal all seven ministry gifts of Romans 12:6-8 (prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy) are given to both males and females, and all the nine spiritual gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation of tongues) are also given to men and women.

There are two passages in the New Testament that contain a prohibition against the ministry of women in exercising authority over men, 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12. Since these verses must be viewed in context with Paul’s other statements and practices and that of the New Testament Church as a whole, they should be viewed as an absolute, unequivocal prohibitions of women’s ministry specifically of women to men. Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians to “let your women keep silence in the churches” does pertain to the women’s role of ministry within the church, specifically to, prophesying, pastoring, preaching, or teaching to men. After examining various translations and interpretations of biblical passages relating to the role of women in the first century Church and desiring to apply the same biblical principles to contemporary church practice, therefore, except for prophesying, pastoring, preaching, or teaching to men, Family Community Church celebrates women at all levels of leadership and ministry, as long as they do not exercise spiritual authority over the man (1 Timothy 2:12).

The message of redemption has been carried to remote parts of the world through the ministry of dedicated, Spirit-filled women. A believer’s gifts and anointing should still make way for one’s ministry whether the believer is male or female.

It should be noted: women should not be licensed or ordained as ministers or deacons of the gospel ministry or serve as the overseer of a church. It is common today to find couples who minister together with the church recognizing them as co-teachers. They are authorized and supported to teach others, male and female, from the age of birth through standard college age years. Yet the sheer numbers of women who are authorized and supported in our church regard themselves as true leaders in the gospel ministry in every sense. They hold authorizations from FCC because they currently do the work of the ministry and desire to minister and lead in an even greater manner. They are not afraid to take on the burden of serving people or to call themselves leaders. Women have served diligently in fields all over the world, some alongside their husbands and some whose husbands are not in vocational ministry. Single women have also served with distinction.

There are cultural issues associated with being a woman in ministry. FCC’s commitment to the authority of Scripture and quality Bible interpretation requires we attempt to define what is cultural and what is biblical. Women, like men, must be diligent to study the Scriptures and understand God’s calling on their lives. Family Community Church has been blessed by the ministry of God’s gifted handmaidens and commissioned daughters.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Among the foremost problems of our time are substance abuse problems surrounding the use of drugs and alcohol.

A 1986 survey¹ shows 70 million Americans have at some time engaged in the illicit use of a drug. Thirty-seven million said they had used illegal drugs in the previous year, and 23 million in the month prior to the survey. Sixty-five percent of 18-25 year-olds have experience with illicit drugs. The survey also established a correlation between drug and alcohol use. Eighteen percent of our population will exhibit dependency problems with alcohol or other drugs during their lifetime. Traffic and safety authorities estimate alcohol is involved in 50 percent of all fatal, automobile accidents in the United States.

The trend to use cocaine, heroin, marijuana, PCP, alcohol, and other drugs as entertainment or an escape mechanism not only speaks of the pressures under which we live but also indicates something of the moral and spiritual conditions of our time. Equally serious is the idea so-called "mind expanding drugs" such as PCP and marijuana should be legalized. Above all those engaged in the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages continue their massive and largely successful promotional efforts to make Americans a drinking people.

Family Community Church believes the evidence is clear the use of drugs has become a leading factor in the soaring crime rate and such use increasingly results in the loss of lives and the destruction of property. The total costs to our society are astronomical (\$160 billion annually)². Forty percent of hospital admissions involve drug or alcohol related diseases.

We deplore the evidence at high levels and from many quarters immense pressure is exerted to encourage more people to drink and at an earlier age. Sixty-six percent of high school seniors consume alcoholic beverages. By age 13 thirty percent of boys drink on a regular basis. Thirty percent of ten-year-olds experience pressure to drink alcohol.

We hereby record our firm condemnation of efforts aimed at abrogating the laws restricting the possession and use of narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates, and alcohol. We commend those who continue to consider it their duty to prosecute violators of existing laws, whether in regard to sale, possession, or use of such drugs.

Specifically we encourage the framing and passage of new laws making it easier for enforcement agencies to apprehend and convict drinking drivers, who are the primary cause of highway fatalities. It is our understanding among such desirable laws are the "implied consent" laws that facilitate the detection and identification of drinking and drunken drivers through various tests conducted by arresting officers.

We also urge our churches to take seriously the problem of the use of alcohol and other drugs, educating their members to the dangers of such use and encouraging them to make abstinence a part of their personal, Christian testimony. As evangelicals we affirm even such extreme problems as those represented here are subject to the power of the Holy Spirit and to solution through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

UNITY

Unity is powerful.

"The Lord said, `If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.'" (Tower of Babel - Genesis 11:6.)

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). We know what happened.

Unity is blessed and to be desired.

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity ... For there the Lord bestows his blessing" (Psalm 133).

¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, Statistical Series, Annual Data 1986

² Chemical People Institute Newsletter, November-December 1987

"... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you ... so that the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:21).

"... a spirit of unity ... one heart and mouth ... accept one another ..." (Romans 15:5-7). (Also Ephesians 2:14, 4:1-7.)

What is unity?

Predominately, Christian unity is mutual identity in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29), shared spiritual life, focus, and direction that transcends difference and diversity. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Unity is rooted in our common love for Christ, his Word, and his mission. It manifests itself in atmosphere, attitude, and action.

How do unity and diversity interrelate?

Unity is not sameness. The church is comprised of individuals distinctly different as to sex, age, race, background, temperament, preferences ... (the body - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). It is our common focus, not our likeness or our perpetual agreement, that unites us.

Uniformity is unrealistic, even undesirable.

How is unity developed?

Relationship with Jesus, commitment to Scripture, and fullness of the Holy Spirit, with fruit (Galatians 5:22; James 3:17), provide the ingredients for unity. "Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5). Unity is of the Holy Spirit. Disunity is of the flesh. "Walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Practical steps to foster unity

1. Cultivate personal growth in the Holy Spirit (unity is of the Spirit);
2. Pray for others by name;
3. Respect and appreciate the uniqueness of others who are not like you;
4. Commit yourself to the well-being of others;
5. Speak well of others to others;
6. Keep no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13); and
7. Hold each other accountable to the above.

How is unity maintained?

Christian love (unselfish commitment to each other's well-being), with genuine respect and appreciation for each other, preserves unity. The application of grace as the inseparable partner of peace is essential. (Romans 1:7 and every Pauline epistle.) Humility is another inseparable element without which unity will not continue. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10). "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). Forgiveness is a key component.

The greatest threats to unity are those subtle invasions of ego, pride, selfishness, and wanting one's own way" Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

The loving practice of biblical discipline (Matthew 18; 1 Timothy 5) fosters unity. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Christian unity is essential to God's fullest blessing. The rewards are worth the effort it takes to develop and preserve unity. May unity flourish among Family Community Church.