



## RELATIONAL GUIDELINE OF COVENANT & COMMITMENT

### ALL LEADERS, MINISTRY TEAMS, MEMBERS & ATTENDEES

#### Purpose of this document

Our church is committed to building a joyful “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace towards us and the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel of Christ in our lives.

*Boundaries  
Welcome!*

As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness, division, and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to Godself through the sacrifice of God’s only Son ([John 13:34-35](#); [Eph. 4:29-32](#); [Col. 3:12-14](#)).

This document serves as a **relational guideline** of the covenant and commitment we believe should form the basis of our church community (family), regarding relationships according to scripture.

**Much of the conflict** that churches experience today arises because they have not clearly established and communicated how they will **govern** their affairs and relate to one another. As a result, there can be significant confusion and disagreement among both leaders and members over how a church will function and act.

When members' **expectations** are not met and they are treated differently than they wish or expect, they can become deeply offended. All too often this leads them to move from church to church, and in these situations there are no winners, just people who are hurting on both sides.

One of the most important steps a church can take to prevent this type of confusion and conflict is to adopt clear and comprehensive governing and relational policies. Hence we have put a document together for this purpose.

The following Commitments and Church Covenant are designed to help the people who attend our church relate to one another in a way that honours God and promotes authentic relationships.

These Commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, marriage and divorce, protecting children from abuse, counselling, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

*Please note: that all references in this document to senior leaders, overall leaders, Pastor/s always refers to our executive Board including the Senior Pastor and at the discretion of the executive Board any Ministry Board members.*



These Commitments are intended to help us build a strong community of faith. By *community*, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of God's love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that true community isn't easy to achieve. Each of us brings our own expectations and agendas into the church. This diversity usually leads to rich discussions and creative ministries; but sometimes it can lead to conflict.

*As James 4:1-2 warns, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it."*

That certainly describes us! At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. That's where these Commitments come in. They pull together key principles from God's Word and serve as our relational guidelines.

### **These Commitments accomplish several important purposes:**

- They remind us of our **mutual commitment** to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.
- They help to **prevent** surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear track for us to run on when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward **reconciliation**.
- They **establish guidelines** for how our leaders will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children/or adults from abuse.
- They define spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by **clearly establishing** our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honour God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ.

As God gives us God's wisdom and grace, we are committed to **actively teaching** and encouraging one another to **live out** the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

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## Personal Peacemaking Resolution

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29-32). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation & restoration of that relationship recognizing that the enemy uses pride to cause division. (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

## Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation

- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

### ***Assisted Peacemaking***

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of “wise seasoned people”, members that have proved themselves so in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to our overall leaders (Pastors) for assistance.



- When *informal* mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek *formal* assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter, where possible.
- If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in their former church, we will require and assist them to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline herein*.
- If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's Word not to go into the civil court, by making every attempt to avoid this kind of action at all costs. (1 Cor. 6:1-8).  
Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation and above all else, prayer. We believe that our ministry of reconciliation will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know Christ's infinite love and peace.

## Commitment to the Marriage Covenant

*So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let humankind not separate (Matt. 19:6).*



God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with his bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7).

Therefore, God established marriage to be a lifelong, monogamous relationship between two people committed to one another for life, exclusively (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties and to create stability.

We believe that both parties must firstly be Reborn Christians, (That is regenerated by the cross of Christ, having made a specific commitment to follow Jesus Christ and by having said the "prayer of Salvation"). If one party is already a member of the church, the other should become a member also, to show their commitment to a covenant relationship founded on Christ.

Proverbs 27:12 is a particularly appropriate Scripture passage for marriage. In that passage the wisest of the wise counsels: *"The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it."* As we emphasize elsewhere in our materials, conflict between persons, even



those close to each other, is inevitable. And taking vows to "have and to hold... for better and for worse... in sickness and in health... till death do us part" does not negate the fact that these two people are sinners and will naturally experience conflict, which has the potential to destroy their marriage.

The fact that you are a Christian does not insulate you from these challenges. As hard as it may be to believe, professing Christians have virtually the same divorce rate as those outside the church. Therefore, to think your marriage is somehow immune to divorce because you are a Christian couple is naive.

If spouses are wise, they will heed King Solomon's advice. They will "see danger and take refuge." In other words, they will take deliberate steps to prevent problems and to build into their marriage "insurance policies" that will help them get through troubled times and stay together.

But they need to do it before the problems arise, when both partners are still committed to making sure their marriage thrives. If couples build insurance into their marriage during their halcyon (untroubled) years together, they have had a much better chance of making it through the tough times. For once trouble arises, one or both spouses may have second thoughts about the marriage and refuse to make the commitment and do the hard work it takes to preserve their relationship.

**Nurture the marital relationship.** It is essential that a couple deliberately cultivate the four key dimensions of their marital relationship: spiritual, intellectual/recreational, emotional, and physical to be a healthy family.

If and when the couple should decide to have children a marriage founded in Christ and built on the principles of marriage in scripture, will be a healthy environment for raising and nurturing children, and will give strength and cohesiveness to society in general, with a big emphasis being added that this does not refer only to the "stereotype" family but includes all families irrespective of sexual orientation.

### **Divorce**

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own.

Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus.

We want all of you to know that you are welcome in our church.

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and preventing divorce, wherever possible.

Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to biblical morals and values regarding marriage and the family, to strengthen and instill these values within our community of believers.



We require and provide thorough premarital counselling to ensure that couples enter into marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by participating in weekly fellowship groups (Home groups), in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another ([Heb. 10:24-25](#)).

As relationships deepen within these groups, we expect couples, husbands & wives, husbands and husbands, wives and wives or spouses, to spur each other on, in loving and cherishing one another, and in encouraging and respecting one another. Couples are there to “undergird” one another, in a healthy loving equal way.

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel, ministry and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided counselling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

We recognize, however, that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. We believe divorce is permissible when the other spouse has been sexually involved with a person outside the marriage ([Matt. 5:31-32](#)), or when an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage or makes it impossible for the believing (born again) spouse, to continue in the marriage due to abuse (both verbal and physical) or in special circumstances, due to an “un-equal yoking”, which is causing dissension in the home to an extent where it is no longer an enjoyable or possible for the believing spouse to reside in peace ([1 Cor. 7:12-16](#)).

We understand that in reality, many have committed to marriage covenants in ignorance of God’s will often before becoming committed Christians, and have at the time, had no notion of God’s will regarding their destined marriage partner. While all attempts must be made to salvage marriage, this must also be taken into account in the process of fair assessment of the reason for a possible divorce. We do believe in [Rom 8:28](#) in the context of God making good out of a bad situation under these circumstances, so there must always be an attempt to salvage the marriage first.

Remember God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to God ([Ps. 103:8-12](#); [Isa. 55:7](#)). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God’s love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace ([Eph. 5:1-2](#)). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin ([Col. 3:12-14](#); [Gal. 6:1](#)).

In some situations, love may require asking the church leaders to initiate formal discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin ([Matt.18:12-20](#)).

Just as church leaders are involved in beginning a marriage, they should be involved when it ends. Therefore, when someone is considering divorce, he or she is expected to bring the situation to the church leaders, letting them speak with godly counsel and wisdom into the situation it would then be advised to cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, to Promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate. (Please remember, that your leaders, will always have your best interests at heart.)



Separated spouses who have filed for divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married. (We understand that there can be gray areas and reconsideration of the spouses' position and marital status when hindered by the other party can be considered, in special circumstances. We believe that each case must be dealt with fairly, each on its own merit, in these exceptional situations.)

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate. We will support a decision to pursue a second marriage to a different committed Christian, only when we have determined that it is biblically valid (taking the "equal yoking and the marriage criteria of the Church into account), and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce (where relevant).

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. God cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God graciously extends this same love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves God (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.

## Commitment to Protecting Our Children

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

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

Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, however, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers), unless he or she has regularly attended our church for at least six months and is a formal member and has been tested and proved to be faithful according to biblical standards.
- We require all of our youth workers to complete a detailed application and application process.
- We require that, whenever practicable, youth workers serve in teams of two or more and be visible to other workers. If a child is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending



youth workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also evaluate our practices and procedures, considering changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.\* \* These are the *minimal* steps a church should take to protect its children from abuse.

### Definition of “Dating”

It is important that we clarify that we believe dating should be a process used when a person believes that the person they have met might be the person they want to marry. Dating would be experienced as “getting to know” the other person mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

Regarding the physical side of things; we know this is also a difficult one, but we believe that this should always be restricted to, “*above the belt*” during dating. The bible tells us that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that the place for sex is in the *confines of the marriage bed*. God has good reason for this by the very definition that marriage is a lifelong commitment. Therefore “Making love” is an extension of our love, and is the ultimate form of physical intimacy when done in a lifelong commitment of love, as an expression of that love for one another. Sex should not be a means to an “end”.

The dating experience should be mentored by a leader who can come alongside you and help you be accountable for your actions as well as to guide you through the process in a healthy way for both parties dating. Mentoring & accountability with a leader, is a requirement for any person involved in a ministry of our church.

### Commitment to Biblical Counselling

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

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships. Whenever believers are unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviours through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and especially and very importantly, from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counselling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; James 5:16).

Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its people to seek counsel from and confess sins to each other, and especially to our overall leaders (Pastors). We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Therefore, our counselling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psycho-therapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

God calls our leaders to set an example for us “in speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Therefore, we expect them to treat counselees with every respect and courtesy, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety or impurity during counselling (Eph. 5:3). We also expect counselees to promptly report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.



To prevent our leaders from being placed in situations that might compromise their pastoral commitments, we, the members and attendees of this church, agree that we will not try to compel them to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge any confidential information they receive through pastoral counselling or ministry (*Prov. 11:13, 25:9*).

There are occasions when our leaders do not have sufficient time to meet with every person who asks for counselling. At such times we expect our leaders to give first priority to people who have formally joined the church and are active (involved in home groups and ministry of the church and are regular members.)(*Gal. 6:10*) and to serve those who only attend the church by referring them to another source of godly counsel.

## **Commitment to Confidentiality**

*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13).*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (*Matt. 7:12*). It also discourages harmful gossip (*Prov. 26:20*), invites confession (*Prov. 11:13*), and thus encourages people to seek needed counselling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members and attendees are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others.

In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counselling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when our leaders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

- when a leader is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from the overall leaders and sometimes other leaders in our church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church (*Prov. 11:14*);
- when the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (*Prov.24:11-12*);
- when a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (*Matt. 18:15-20*); or,
- when leaders are required by law to report suspected abuse (*Rom. 13:1*).

*Rom 16:17 I urge you, brothers & sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*



## Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline



*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).*

***Like all of our Relational Commitments, the principles and practices described below apply to all the people who attend our church (leaders members and attendees).***

### **A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love**

God has established the church to reflect God's character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11).

God loves the church so much that God sent God's Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). God's ultimate purpose for the church is to present her as a gift to Jesus God's Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the "bride" of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason God, our Heavenly Parent, the Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. God knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12).

Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace.

We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "discipline."

The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. Discipline in the church is never punitive but always restorative. True discipline originates from God Godself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love.

*"The Lord disciplines those the Lord loves" (Heb. 12:6). "Blessed is the person you discipline, O LORD, the person you teach from your law" (Ps.94:12). "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline" (Rev. 3:19).*



God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. It is restorative, not punitive.

This process, which is sometimes referred to as "formative discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, God corrects us. One way God does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track.

This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

*If a person has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he/she not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he/she finds it, I tell you the truth, he/she is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matt. 18:12-13).*

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honour and glory of God's name (1 Pet. 2:12). Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life.

We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey.

We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in God's Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to help one another obey God's command to be "*self controlled, upright, holy and disciplined*" (Titus 1:8).

**The leaders of our church recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:19-20 & 1 Tim chap 3).**

(This also applies to pastor/s. Please refer to the constitution regarding steps to be taken if the pastor/s commit sin.)

Therefore, the leaders are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from their Pastors, each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline that the senior pastor or executive Board believes is fitting.

**As an example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give them money to invest, and then fail to return the money as**



promised. Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to these schemes, and many people have lost much of what they had saved for retirement. But this could be in any form.

When such sinful people are discovered, they usually leave a church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes, or often, those that they feel will “lend their ears” and so without perhaps even the realization of it, can be manipulated and the wrong “seeds” can be sown.

If our senior leaders /pastors found such a person in our church, they would call that person to repent and confess their wrongs. If the person refused, they would bring the person under formal discipline, and also warn the congregation not to trust that person with their money/or in whichever general sense is applicable.

If our Pastors inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the individual’s name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as:

How widely known the situation already is; whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the individual to repent; or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm the person might cause.

Even if our leaders decide it is not necessary to identify an individual specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help to enlist wide prayer support, let the congregation know that our leaders are obeying the Lord’s command to seek after those who stray, and warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our Pastor/s may bring the situation before the congregation publicly after counselling the person if there is no repentance and advise the congregation of the situation, as the Pastor sees fit to do, in order to save the congregation from false scandal, by making the truth known publicly. Then the person will be treated as an unbeliever and will be asked to leave the church **only if** they refuse to repent. As mentioned, it is always the desire of the Pastor and leaders that no person should leave, these are last resort measures to protect the entire church.

## **B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal**

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).* Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God’s Word, seeks God in prayer, and draws on God’s grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But often, we are **blind** to our sins or *so tangled in them* that we **cannot get free on our own**. This is why the Bible says, *“Brothers or sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore them gently” (Gal. 6:1).*

In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behaviour or doctrine) seems too serious to



overlook (Prov. 19:11). If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. “If they will not listen, take one or two others along” (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher or church leader and bring the matter to the attention of our pastors.

If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called “formal discipline.”

### **C. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church (Telling it to the Church).**

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behaviour that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to “tell it to the church” (Matt. 18:17a).

*This first* involves informing one or more senior church leaders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover.

The individual will be given *every reasonable opportunity* to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes their sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our senior leaders (Pastor/s) may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).

As the disciplinary process progresses, our leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, withholding of the Lord’s Supper, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship (can also be a sabbatical depending on the wrong and on the designation or rank of the person in the church), and as a last resort, removal from membership (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from counsel and our overall leaders, they may inform others in the church at their discretion, who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person’s behaviour.

This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our Senior Pastor deems it to be appropriate (Matt. 18:17, 1 Tim. 5:20).

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our Senior Pastor at his or her discretion (in consultation with the executive Board), may formally remove him or her from membership and normal fellowship. They also may inform the church body of their decision and instruct the congregation to treat the individual as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat the person as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to them, remind them of God’s holiness and mercy, and call them to *repent* and put their faith in Christ



(Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). This should always be done in conjunction with careful guidance from leaders. (If you are not willing to participate in loving correction perhaps it would be best not to have contact with the person, who is not willing to repent.)

**We realize that our natural human response to correction is often to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10).** To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline.

Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability if discipline is pending against us. Although we are free to stop attending the church at any time, we agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not be given effect until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 13:17).

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our overall leaders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may *inform that church* of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from his sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

**Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process.** If an individual repents, and our leaders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14).

People who have been excluded from another church, (with the exception of their exclusion being because of their sexual orientation or any other "ism" that is discriminatory in nature); will not be allowed to partake of the communion in our church, or become members, or to participate in the regular fellowship of our church until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our senior Pastor and leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

If an individual disagrees with the way discipline has been carried out, the facts will be heard by the Senior Pastor & the Executive Board, to determine if there was any "irregularity" in the way in which it was handled and will be looked into further, if necessary.

However, in general it might be best advised that the person, be referred to another church where perhaps they might feel more comfortable if they are unable to find suitability in our family at Deo Gloria Family Church.

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture:

*"God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share in God's holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:10-11).*



## Membership

**We believe that God wants every Christian to become a member of a local church.** To learn more you can also read Joshua Harris's book, *Stop Dating the Church*, and the third chapter of Donald Whitney's book, *Spiritual Disciplines Within the Church: Participating Fully in the Body of Christ*. You can also read Dr. C Peter Wagner's book: *Churchquake* to get a better feel and understanding of the church structure of the "new wineskin" charismatic churches.

Becoming a member of a church can be a life-changing decision. The preaching, teaching, fellowship, opportunities to use your gifts, and **mutual accountability** that you experience in a church can dramatically change your relationship with the Lord and with the people God places in your life.

Therefore, we want you to take time to get to know our church, learn how we are fulfilling God's command to build God's kingdom, and see how we love and relate to one another in daily life.

If you like what you see in our church, and you are not already a member, we want to invite you to become a member. During the membership class you will learn more about our church's doctrines and vision for ministry, and about the privileges and responsibilities of formal membership and ministry groups. Attending the class will *not obligate you to become a member*.

If attending the membership classes convinces you that joining our church will help to you grow in your ability to love and serve God, we would be delighted to have you become a member of our body. By joining our church, you will demonstrate in a concrete way your desire to unite with us to advance Christ's kingdom. Membership also will allow you to enjoy ministry opportunities and privileges that are not available to people who only attend our church, including the following:

- You may *participate and vote in congregational meetings*, where we seek to discern and plan how to follow God's vision for our church.
- You will be eligible to *minister to the children and youth* in our church (after completing our standard screening process).
- You can seek *more opportunities to use your spiritual gifts*, including those of teaching, serving and leading within the body and in a ministry team.
- If you need counselling or support from our leaders and overall leaders, when their time is limited, *your request for assistance will take precedence* over requests from people who have not joined the church.
- You will have the opportunity to become part of a living family of God to find God's peace, joy and love among the fellowship of believers and become integrated in a place where you can find your destiny and purpose and live it out in God's fullness & wholeness.

If you would like to learn more about the importance of church membership, you may meet with our leaders, or talk to any of our regular seasoned members. They would be happy to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about membership.



## Church Covenant

### By the Members of Deo Gloria Family Church

#### Our Commitments to One Another in the Sight of God

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the God our heavenly Parent and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

1. We engage, therefore, by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry and our pastor, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor and the spread of the inclusive Gospel of Christ through all nations, for the furtherance of God's Kingdom, through this church.
2. We also engage to maintain family and our private devotional time with the Lord; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our family members and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting and excessive anger; and to seek God's help in abstaining from all drugs, food, drink and practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.
3. We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly/sisterly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian empathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; and to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.
4. We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, we will go with the blessing of our leaders, to be sent by God as we walk in agreement with our purpose and vision of our Pastor as is given by God, always keeping the spirit of this covenant.

#### Affirmations

Having been chosen by God and drawn by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, I now, with a view to my baptism in the name of God my Heavenly Parent, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit, do joyfully enter into this covenant with the members of this church as one body in Christ, according to the following affirmations and commitments.

- a) I believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation.

[2 Tim. 3:14-17](#); [2 Pet. 1:19-21](#); [Matt. 4:4](#)



- b) I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving God’s wrath, and without hope except in God’s sovereign love and mercy to save me.  
Rom. 3:9-18, 23; 6:23; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:1-10; Tit. 3:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:2-9; Rom. 8:29-30
  - c) I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners, and receive and rest upon him alone for salvation as he is offered to me in the Gospel.  
John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:9-26; 10:9; Phil. 2:5-11; 3:5-9; Tit. 3:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:15
  - d) I resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I will endeavour to put to death the misdeeds of my sinful nature and to live my life as is fitting a true follower of Jesus Christ. Eph. 4:17-6:4; Col. 3:1-4:6; 1 Pet. 1:13-15; 2:18-5:11; 2 Pet. 1:3-9; Rom. 8:29; 12:1-15:14
  - e) I promise to support the church, my Pastors and leaders, in all spheres of the work of church to the best of my ability. Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-15; Eph. 4:1-16; Heb. 10:24-25; 12:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:7-11
  - f) I submit myself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to pursue its purity and peace. Matt. 16:18; 18:15-20; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:17-20; Heb. 13:17; Col. 3:15; Rom. 12:12:18-21
7. Finally, I acknowledge that I have received and read the Bylaws and Relational Commitments of this church, and I hereby covenant and agree to support and submit to them. I agree that I will be accountable to God and my leadership for all that I am commissioned to do in my area/s of ministry through *God’s grace and power*.

Signed on this the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 200\_\_\_\_\_

Full Name of Member

Rev. Deborah Bell  
Senior Pastor and President  
Executive Board  
Deo Gloria Family Church

Signature of ministry team or Board Member

Marietjie Geldenhuys  
Co-Pastor & Vice President  
Executive Board  
Deo Gloria Family Church

*Please note that the Relational Covenant may be changed at the discretion of the executive Board from time to time. The executive Board will gladly issue you will the latest updates at your request. Document resolution date: 23.03.2009*