

CHRIST REDEEMER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Live Oak, FL

Relational Commitments

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Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

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

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

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

Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). 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 (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 He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others' interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to the Council of Elders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our Council of Elders 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 Elders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to CRPC has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him/**her** 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*.
- If we have a legal dispute with or within CRPC and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's command not to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries (www.Peacemaker.net).

Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know his infinite love and peace. ¹

¹ Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man 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, he established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

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. Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to strengthening marriages and families. We require and provide thorough premarital counseling 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 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 husbands to spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and wives to encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel 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 counseling, 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 (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Even though divorce is *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required*. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to him (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 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 our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

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 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 person only when we have determined that it is biblically valid and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He 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 him (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.

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

We confess that the church is subject only to Christ. God alone is Lord of the conscience (WCF 20). While church members ought to obey civil rulers in temporal things, provided they are not required by those authorities to sin (Mk. 12:13-17; Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pt. 2:13-17), the church has a divine right to embody her beliefs in her practices and to carry out the mission Christ has entrusted to her without interference or hindrance. The church as an institution shall remain free from state control in faith, doctrine, and practice, and her members should not be forced to act contrary to their consciences, as informed by the Word of God. We gladly render to Caesar what is Caesar's, but under no circumstances will we render to Caesar that which belongs only to God. With these truths in view, we declare the church's right to reject any attempts on the part of the state to impose on the church or her members unbiblical definitions of marriage.

Marriage as a covenant bond between a man and a woman is an institution founded not in cultural convention or convenience, but in God's act of creation (Gen. 2:23-24). Marriage is God's ordinance, a holy mystery instituted for his glory and our good. It is our desire to honor the marriage bed and keep it undefiled (Heb. 13:4). Sex outside of marriage, sex with someone other than one's spouse, divorce without biblical grounds, and the taking of more than one spouse, are all among the many ways in which God's institution of marriage has been dishonored. We believe the union between husband and wife in heart, body, and mind to be a sacred bond, intended by God for their mutual joy and companionship; for the help and comfort given one another in times of prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. We believe man and woman to be equal in creation and redemption, equal in worth and dignity; and yet the sexes are different from one another and thus complementary in their roles in church, society, and family. God has ordained the covenant of marriage so that husband and wife would together symbolize the relationship of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:21ff); he has designed loving and faithful marriages to be the best possible context in which children, as the fruit of their parents' mutual love, can be raised to healthy maturity; and he has called husband and wife to help one another in the pursuit of a common salvation and service to the common good of humanity. Because of the nature of the marriage relation, a believer ought to marry in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39).

We believe the preservation of biblical marriage to be essential to the well-being and health not only of the church but of civil society. Following the Scriptures and the historic Christian tradition, we define marriage as a

covenant freely and lawfully entered into by a man and a woman, sealed by sexual relations (WCF 24). This covenant is to be a lifelong commitment until husband and wife are parted by death. The covenant of marriage can be broken by infidelity (Matt. 19:1-10) or desertion (1 Cor. 7:10-16). If at all possible, broken marriage covenants should be repaired through repentance and forgiveness, though we recognize there are situations where such full restoration will be impossible or unwise. The session of CRPC is responsible to determine for her members if there are biblical grounds for divorce in any given case.

We believe the covenant of marriage between a man and woman to be the only relationship in which God's gift of sex can be lawfully enjoyed (Prov. 5:15-23). Sex with anyone other than one's spouse is sin and, thus, contrary to human flourishing. The covenant bond of marriage protects the precious treasure of sex. Misuses of God's beautiful gift of sexuality through fornication, premarital cohabitation, adultery, pornography, attempts to surgically or chemically alter one's gender, transvestism, etc., lead to the dehumanizing of self and the exploitation of others, contrary to the law of love. We are urged in Scripture to make a covenant with our eyes to not look lustfully on another (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:27-30), to abstain from sexual immorality that we may possess our bodies in holiness and honor (1 Thess. 4:1-8), and to not present our members as instruments of sin but to present ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:1-14).

We resist all attempts to redefine marriage to include same-sex partnerships. We can never regard a same-sex relationship of any kind as a marriage, no matter what civil governments or societies might say about it. Homosexual relations are unlawful and contrary to our God-designed natures as men and women (Rom. 1:18-32). While humanity's fall into sin has disordered our desires, including our sexual desires, God's original design in the creation of man and woman remains normative (Gen. 1-2; Matt. 19:1-10). Certainly, we desire to bless, serve, and love persons with homosexual desires. We know we are fellow image-bearers and fellow sinners along with them, and we long to show them the compassion of Christ. But we cannot countenance the fulfillment of their desires under any circumstances. Rather, we call on persons with such desires to join us in trusting the Lord Jesus to forgive our sin through his shed blood and transform us by his healing grace.

In light of these principles, the session of CRPC adopts the following policy: Our church building and property are not to be used to host any ceremonies inconsistent with the biblical teaching on marriage, nor is our staff to be involved with such ceremonies. For example, this means a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is not to be conducted on CRPC grounds. Neither is an unlawfully divorced person with outstanding obligations to their former spouse to be married on our property. Likewise,

this policy means any kind of ceremony between a same-sex couple is not to be performed on CRPC grounds. Further, the session forbids CRPC ministers or staff from conducting or participating in any such services. May God help us as we confess and defend the teaching of his Word concerning the institution of marriage.

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

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

Children are a blessing from God, and he calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a 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.
- We require all of our youth workers to complete a detailed application and screening 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.

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

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

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 behaviors through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and when needed from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling 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 to our leaders.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling 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 counseling (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 counseling 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 counseling. At such times we expect our leaders to give first priority to people who have formally joined the church (Gal. 6:10), and to serve those who only attend the church by referring them to another source of godly counsel.

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

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 counseling. 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 counseling, 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 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).

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

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

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

A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God’s Love

God has established the church to reflect his character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves his church so much that he sent his Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). His ultimate purpose for his church is to present her as a gift to his Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the “bride” of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and 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. He 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. True discipline originates from God himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. “The Lord disciplines those he loves” (Heb. 12:6). “Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man 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. 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, he corrects us. One way he 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 man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he 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 honor 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 his 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). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of our body.

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 him in prayer, and draws on his grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes 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, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him 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, behavior 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 he 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. 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

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior 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 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 his 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 leaders 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, 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 our leaders, they may inform others in the church 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 behavior.² This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our leaders deem it to be appropriate (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20).³

Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to bring the gospel to him in a lovingly manner, and to remind him/her of God's holiness and mercy, and call him to repent and put his faith in Christ. (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20)

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is 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 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.⁴ (Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 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 will not be allowed to partake of the sacraments in our church, to 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 leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

If an individual disagrees with the way discipline has been conducted, he or she may appeal that decision. One final session with the Council of Elders will be afforded the appellant to give additional rationale why they believe the discipline was Biblically unjust.

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, that we may share in his 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).

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1. If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our leaders 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 him as a fellow Christian.
 2. For example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give him 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. When such sinful men are discovered, they usually leave a church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes. If our leaders found such a man in our church, they would call him to repent and confess his wrongs. If he refused, they would bring him under formal discipline, and also warn the congregation not to trust him with their money.
 3. If our leaders 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 he might cause (see previous footnote). 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.
 4. For example, if we confronted a man in our church for seducing young women, or for acting inappropriately around little children, or for sowing gossip and division, and he left and started attending another church, we would consider it our duty to urge the leaders of that church to counsel with him and to protect their people from his harmful behavior.

Christ Redeemer Presbyterian Church

CHURCH COVENANT

Having been chosen by God and drawn by the Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, I now, with a view to my baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of 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.

- 1. I believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and that its teaching is the only wise and true way for faith, practice and salvation.** (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Matt. 4:4)
- 2. I acknowledge myself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his wrath and judgment, and that I am 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)
- 3. I trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and I believe that He is the only Savior of sinners, and I do receive and rely upon Him alone for my acceptance before God and my salvation as He is offered 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)
- 4. I resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I will endeavor to put to death the misdeeds and desires of my sinful nature and to live my life as is fitting to 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)
- 5. I promise to support the church in its worship and ministry 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)
- 6. I submit myself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace.** (Matt. 16:18; 18:15-20; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:17-20; Heb. 12:14; 13:17; Col. 3:15; Rom. 12:18-21)

Signature

Date

Print Name

Pastor's Signature

Date

