



Chester's First Baptist Church Membership Agreement

We believe that to carry on the religious mission of the church, to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons who associate with the church as members should abide by and agree to the following statements and conduct themselves in accordance with them.

(initial) **A. Statement of Faith**
We believe Chester's First Baptist Church's Statement of Faith.

(initial) **B. Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen. 1.26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen. 2.18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor. 6.18; 7.2-5; Heb. 13.4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, all intimate sexual conduct outside the marital union of one man and one woman, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, dressing and behaving in contradiction with one's biological sex, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt 15. 18-20; 1 Cor. 6.9-10.)

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of First Baptist Church of Chester as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the First Baptist Church of Chester's members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by First Baptist Church of Chester in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5.16; Phil. 2.14-16; 1 Thess. 5.22.)

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3.19-21; Rom. 10.9-10; 1 Cor. 6.9-11.) We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12.28-31; Luke 6.31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrine of the First Baptist Church of Chester.

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, First Baptist Church of Chester will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the Pastor and staff of the church shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriage between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Chester First Baptist Church shall only host weddings between one man and

one woman. Both parties seeking to be married with the blessing of First Baptist Church must be over 18 years of age.

(initial) **C. Statement on Church Discipline**

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Cor. 5.6), to edify believers by deterring sin and promoting purity (1 Tim. 5.20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Gal. 6.1).

The Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of the restoration of the offender. This discipline is entrusted to the Pastor and Deacon body and is to follow the biblical pattern as set forth in Matthew 18.15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2.7-8; Galatians 6.1; 2 Thessalonians 3.6; Titus 3.10-11; and 2 John 7-11. Any members of this church who practices or affirms a doctrine or conduct that, in the judgment of the Pastor and Deacon body, is opposed to the teaching of the Word of God, or is threatening to the testimony of this church, or is divisive to the body, shall be subject to church discipline.

Discipline will follow the said biblical pattern, and is an effort to bring the individual to repentance and protect the church from unrepentant sin. Discipline may involve exclusion from participation in ministry and communion, as well as dismissal from the fellowship of this church. An individual may be disciplined by the Pastor and Deacon body short of dismissal from the fellowship, as they deem appropriate for the specific circumstances (for example, an individual may remain in certain circumstances a member of this church but be denied the privilege of serving in a particular ministry.) The Pastor and Deacon body, as is required by Scripture, may report to the congregation the names of those who have lost membership by reason of church discipline, and the reason for that discipline, as described in Matthew 18.15-20.

The members of this church further knowingly and voluntarily agree that a member cannot voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership in the midst of the discipline process, and may only voluntarily withdraw or resign his or her membership if they are not the subject of a discipline proceeding at the time or only after a disciplinary process, of which they are the subject has been concluded as determined by the Pastor and Deacon body.

(initial) **D. Statement of Mediation**

Members of the church agree to submit any legal dispute with the church for mediation before a mutually agreed-upon mediator, or if none can be agreed upon, one selected by Peacemaker Ministries. Lawsuits between believers, or threats of lawsuits between believers, are a matter of grave concern for the church, are contrary to biblical and church teaching, and mediation is an effort to resolve disputes in a biblical fashion (1 Cor. 6.1-7.)

Mediation will be governed by the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation* of the Institute for Christian Conciliation (ICC *Rules*), unless modified as stipulated by the parties. In particular, subject to the more detailed provisions of the ICC Rules, mediator(s) will attempt to

assist us in reaching a voluntary settlement of any disputes through mediation. The confidentiality of the mediation process will be protected and these matters will not be discussed with people who do not have a necessary interest in them. If settlement can be agreed upon, the conciliators may, at their discretion, issue an advisory opinion. Neither the opinion, nor any communications exchanged in the mediation process, will be admissible for any purpose in any subsequent legal proceeding.

E. Statement on Life

(initial)

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other state or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps. 139.)

F. Statement of Final Authority on Matters of Faith and Conduct

(initial)

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of the First Baptist Church of Chester's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Pastor and Deacon Body is the First Baptist Church of Chester's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

I have reviewed the statements above as indicated by my initials before each of them, and agree to be governed by all the provisions herein.

Name

Date