

ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

Introduction

Having declared in our Articles of Faith what we believe, in our Articles of Practice we declare how we should accordingly live. God calls us not only to affirm our core beliefs as the Missionary Church but also to embody those truths in Christian community. As Christians, we have been called to “guard the good deposit” (2 Tim 1:14), that body of truth God has entrusted to our care (1 Tim 6:20; Jude 3). Yet God has also called us to “the obedience that comes from faith” (Rom 1:5).

Such obedience becomes possible only because God supernaturally produces in us a new manner of life, one governed by his Word and empowered by his Spirit. The Christian life is not a burdensome pursuit of legalistic righteousness

¹⁰ Matt 18:15-17, 16:13-18, 26:26-30, 28:18-20; Luke 22:15-20; John 13:35; Acts 1:8, 2:38-42, 46-47, 8:36-39, 20:7, 28, 32; Rom 6:3-5; 1 Cor 5:1-4, 10:16, 11:23-24, 12:12-27, 16:2; Eph 1:5-6, 22-23, 3:21, 4:11-16; Col 1:18, 2:12; Heb 12:23; 1 Pet 3:21, 4:11; 1 John 3:14, 4:2, 5:1-5; Jude 20-21; compare Mark 16:16

¹¹ Ps 2:7-9, 96:13, 98:9; Eccl 12:14; Isa 9:3-7, 11:6-9, 65:17, 66:22; Dan 7:13-14, 12:2; Matt 24:14-31, 36-51, 25:1-46; Mark 9:42-48, 13:10, 32-37; Luke 21:27-28; John 5:24, 28-29, 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; Rom 8:1, 29; 1 Cor 3:8-15, 4:2-5, 11:32, 15:24-25, 58; 2 Cor 5:10; Eph 1:3-14; Phil 1:21-23, 3:20-21; Col 3:1-4; 1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess 1:8-9, 2:1-10; 2 Tim 4:8; Titus 2:12-13; Heb 9:27-28, 12:5-8; Jas 5:7-8; 2 Pet 3:13; 1 John 2:28-3:3; Rev 1:7, 22:12-13; 6:1-19:21, 20:10-15, 21:1-22:7

(Matt 5:20). Instead, it is an abundant life in which, led by God’s Spirit, we delight in becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

When we are reconciled to God in Christ, we are made a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). As we yield our lives to the loving sovereignty of his Son, God makes every facet of our experience — whether individual or corporate, public or private — an instrument for the exhibition of his glory. Having received the Holy Spirit, we are commanded to walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16) and be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). Then our lives will demonstrate, in increasing measure, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), the unmistakable evidence of his indwelling presence.

Being a follower of Christ is more than a matter of belief; it is also a way of life. “Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus lived” (1 John 2:6). God intends for us to reflect his character as “imitators of God” (Eph 5:1). He commands us, “Be holy, because I am holy” (Lev 11:44, 45; 1 Pet 1:16), and he graciously empowers us to embrace a way of living that displays the image of his Son.

Exercising Personal Faith

God calls us to exercise personal faith. While the Christian life is lived in community — “For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Cor 12:13) — we are called to embrace that life personally. Responding to the gracious invitation of the gospel individually, we turn from sin and embrace God, thus receiving the benefits of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13). We receive salvation as we personally repent and believe in Jesus, receiving eternal life and escaping eternal condemnation (Mark 1:15; John 3:16-18; Rev 3:20). Without such faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

Believers cannot grow to spiritual maturity without cultivating a relationship with God. We affirm the need for Christians to nurture their faith through Bible reading (Ps 1), prayer (Col 4:2), weekly gatherings with other believers (Heb 10:25), serving in ministry (1 Pet 4:10-11), sharing their faith (Phil 6), and other spiritual disciplines. We do not, however, consider such disciplines ends in themselves but rather means by which to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 3:18).

Cultivating Holiness

God calls us to a life of holiness. While God himself is ultimately the one who makes us holy (Ps 51:10; 1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:12), the Bible commands us: “Make every effort . . . to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Having been united with Christ by faith, we are called to follow Jesus (Matt 4:19), imitating him in our conduct (1 Cor 11:1) and in the attitude of our minds (Eph 4:23).

To be holy means to die to sin (1 Pet 2:24). We believe as Christians we have already died with Christ. We have been liberated from sin’s dominion and freed to offer ourselves wholly to God (Rom 6:1-14). Nevertheless, we must continue to put to death sinful attitudes and behaviors (Col 3:5), putting off the old self and its corrupt way of life (Eph 4:22-23). God calls us to flee immorality (1 Cor 6:18), to resist the devil (Jas 4:7), and to disdain the enticements of the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16).

Holiness also means being set apart for God and his glory. By faith, we have been raised in Christ to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). We are to put on the new self (Eph 4:24), keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5:25), and surrender ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:13). We are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1-2), making every effort to develop godly conduct and character (2 Pet 1:3-7), and endeavoring to love God wholly and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt 22:35-40). In brief, a life of holiness is a life of love.

While sanctification demands our willing surrender (Phil 2:12), it remains, from first to last, the gracious work of God (1 Cor 15:10). The will and the power to be transformed comes from him. “For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil 2:13). We work, but we do so in the power he provides (Col 1:29).

To fulfill our high calling, we must resist being conformed to unbiblical values and behaviors (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:17). Instead, our lives should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) and increasing godliness. An authentic Christian life will bear faithful witness to Christ, exhibiting his characteristics of integrity, purity, generosity, and justice.

Since it contradicts the biblical principles of simplicity, transparency, and honesty (2 Cor 4:2; 2 Cor 5:11), Christians must not hold membership in secret, oath-bound societies. Nor should believers form any kind of partnerships that cause them to compromise their Christian principles (2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

Since we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and bought at great price, God calls us to glorify him with our bodies (1 Cor 6:19b-20). To willfully dishonor our bodies with sexual immorality is irreverent and inconsistent with our standing as servants of God and is therefore forbidden. God has called us to flee impurity, to exercise self-control, and to refrain from wronging or taking advantage of another (1 Thess 4:3-7).

We must, likewise, avoid the abuse of any substance — whether legal or illegal — that damages health, results in intoxication, or impairs sound judgment. God requires self-control in all things (Prov 23:1-2; Prov 23:20-21; Prov 25:28; 2 Pet 1:5-6).

While the Scriptures clearly forbid drunkenness (Prov 20:21; Prov 31:4-7; Eph 5:18; Rom 13:13; 1 Pet 4:3), they do not categorically require total abstinence from alcohol (1 Tim 5:23). While we affirm the principle of Christian liberty in this matter, we also recognize that the loving exercise of personal freedom cannot supersede the biblical imperative to “Make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister” (Rom 14:13). We recognize believers have varying convictions about the wisdom of abstinence and moderation. These convictions merit mutual respect and prayerful consideration.

Living in Community

God calls us to live in community. While every believer enters the Christian life through the exercise of

personal faith, God's Spirit makes them part of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-14). The Bible envisions the life of faith not only as an individualistic endeavor but also as a corporate pursuit.

God calls us to a shared life. We share a rich life of fellowship (*koinonia*) in which we devote ourselves, not to the pursuit of self-interest, but to the well-being of others. God calls us to love one another (John 13:34), serve one another (Gal 5:13), forgive one another (Eph 4:32), encourage one another (Heb 3:13), pray for one another (Jas 5:16), submit to one another (Eph 5:21), and build one another up (1 Thess 5:11).

The Scriptures instruct us to enter into commitments mindfully (Lev 5:4; Prov 19:2), to honor our word (Matt 5:37), to be honest and direct in our dealings (Eph 4:25; Matt 5:37), to be merciful toward others (Mic 6:8), to listen carefully (Prov 18:13), and to admit when we are wrong (Matt 7:5). We are also admonished to confront each other privately before bringing in other witnesses (Matt 18:16-20), to be forgiving (Eph 4:32), and to make restitution for damage done to another (Exod 21:33-36). Furthermore, we are encouraged to overlook personal offenses (Prov 19:11). In cases of criminal abuse, however, we affirm the legal responsibility for ministers to engage the appropriate civil authorities.

When Christians have disputes with one another, they should seek to settle those disputes via biblical mediation so as not to undermine their witness before the world (1 Cor 6:1-8). Courts have a responsibility to ensure civic order, but Christians have a biblical obligation to pursue mutual forbearance and love and to live at peace with everyone "as far as it depends on you" (Rom 12:18).

Christian community ought to be marked by compassion. The Christian life is a pilgrimage with many painful milestones along the way (Phil 1:29). The witness of Scripture is clear: "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Therefore, believers are exhorted to "mourn with those who mourn" (Rom 12:15), to bear each other's burdens (Gal 6:2), and to comfort the afflicted (2 Cor 1:3-7).

God also calls Christians to pray together for healing, both for themselves and for others (Jas 5:13-16). God has provided for the ultimate removal of sin, sickness, and sorrow through the redeeming work of Christ (Isa 53:5; Matt 8:16-17), and he has promised that one day the painful effects of sin shall pass away (Rev 21:4). In the meantime, God commands his people to ask in faith and hope for healing now. Nonetheless, Christians are admonished to submit themselves to God's will, recognizing that he may, for his own good purposes, choose not to heal presently (2 Cor 12:7b-10; Rom 8:28; 2 Tim 4:20). Since God is the giver of all good gifts (Jas 1:17), Christians may seek medical assistance without any implication that they lack faith.

God commands all creation to worship him. "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!" (Ps 150:6). He is worthy to receive all glory and honor and praise (Rev 4:11, 5:12). Yet he has chosen to make himself uniquely manifest among his people as they gather in his presence (Ps 22:3; 1 Cor 5:4; Matt 18:20). While we each have the privilege and responsibility to seek God individually (Mark 1:35; Matt 6:6), we ought also, unless circumstances render it impossible, to seek him in community. Regular times of worship have always characterized God's people — in the Old Testament (Exod 20:8, 23:14-17), in the time of Jesus (Luke 4:16), and in the New Testament church (Acts 2:42; Heb 10:24-25).

In the Old Testament, God instituted the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship (Exod 20:8-11; Lev 23:3). God gave his people the Sabbath as a gift for their good (Mark 2:27), to ensure a healthy cycle of labor and rest. He also intended it for his own glory, with each Sabbath being "a Sabbath to the LORD" (Exod 20:10). Every Sabbath served as a call to worship, with each seventh day serving as a reminder that God was humanity's Creator, Provider, and Redeemer (Exod 16:21-30; Deut 5:12-15).

When the Church was formed, Christians set aside Sunday as the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2; Rev 1:10). Weekly Sunday worship commemorated the resurrection of Jesus, who was raised to life on the "first day of the week" (Matt 28:1). While Christians do not keep the Lord's Day legalistically, that is, according to Old Testament Sabbath laws (Col 2:16), they are nonetheless encouraged to reserve a particular day of the week where they can break from the rhythms of work for the purposes of rest, the celebration of the family, and worship. Regardless of the particular day, God's people are exhorted to meet regularly with other

believers whenever possible for mutual encouragement (Heb 10:24-25), for the public reading and proclamation of God's Word (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:1-2), for corporate prayer (Acts 1:14, 4:24), for worship in song (Col 3:16), for the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12), and for the celebration of the ordinances of baptism (Acts 2:38-41) and the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26-30; 1 Cor 11:23-26).

Living on Mission

Jesus calls us to a life of mission. Called to be his disciples, we are also commanded to make disciples of others (Matt 4:19, 28:19-20; Mark 8:31-38). He has commissioned us to take the gospel — the proclamation of Christ crucified, risen, presently reigning, and coming again (1 Cor 2:2; 1 Cor 15:1-4, 20-25; Acts 1:11) — to the whole world. Jesus is and always will be humanity's only Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The gospel, for every generation and culture, "is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16).

Jesus calls us to join him on mission (John 20:21), and he promises to be with us "always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Furthermore, he pledged and provided the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 1:8). While every believer has a personal responsibility to make disciples (Matt 28:19; 2 Tim 2:2), we are also called to labor together as partners in the gospel (Phil 1:5) and as members of one body with each part doing its work (Eph 4:16).

While the gospel is essentially a message of what God has done for us in Christ, living faith invariably produces in us the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:8-10). Jesus calls his followers to be salt and light, like a "city set on a hill" (Matt 5:13-14). Good deeds pave the way for the proclamation of the gospel (Matt 5:16; 1 Pet 2:12). They are the inevitable fruit of saving grace (Eph 2:10) and living faith (Jas 2:26), and they provide unmistakable evidence that we have been truly transformed by the gospel's power (1 John 3:16-18).

Building Healthy Families

God calls us to live as family. He adopts all those who receive Christ by faith (John 1:12; Gal 3:26-4:7) and makes them members of his household (Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15), thus comprising one spiritual family.

The natural realm mirrors that same order. The human family, though not immune from the effects of the Fall, remains divinely designed. Marriage has been instituted by God as a blessing. It embodies the divine ideal for the family, providing the most stable foundation on which it can stand (Gen 2:24). While this ideal is not always realized, God — our loving Father — nevertheless graciously favors his people with his presence and provision.

God has ordained the marriage covenant as a publicly affirmed union between one man (born male) and one woman (born female) until parted by death. This is the pattern that he commands for marriage (Matt 19:4-6).

While the principle of mutual submission is enjoined for all believers (Eph. 5:21), God has appointed the husband head of the wife (Eph 5:23; 1 Cor 11:3). Husbands are particularly called to love their wives sacrificially (Eph 5:25-29), live with them with consideration and respect (1 Pet 3:7), and not be harsh with them (Col 3:19). Wives, in turn, are called to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:6) and to show them appropriate respect (Eph 5:33).

Sexual relations are a gift from God to be enjoyed in the covenant of marriage (Gen 2:24-25; 1 Cor 7:3-5). Any sexual activity outside of marriage constitutes sexual immorality and is clearly forbidden in the Bible (Exod 20:14; Mark 7:20; 1 Cor 6:18; Gal 5:19; 1 Thess 5:22; Heb 13:4). Couples must not engage in pre-marital sex nor "live together" without the benefit of a marriage covenant. Co-habitation, however commonplace, counterfeits and distorts God's beautiful and benevolent design for marriage.

The Scriptures command believers not to marry unbelievers (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-17). Churches and parents, therefore, have an obligation to teach a biblical view of marriage and to warn believers against being yoked with unbelievers. Ministers are forbidden to knowingly officiate at the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever.

Furthermore, the Missionary Church forbids ministers to encourage, bless, or solemnize same sex “marriages” or unions (Matt 19:4-6).

Since marriage is a sacred, publicly affirmed covenant, ministers are forbidden to preside over ceremonies in which couples refuse to register with the civil authorities merely for the sake of convenience or financial benefit. They are also forbidden from knowingly officiating at marriages entered into solely for the sake of citizenship or other civil benefits.

Though Scripture commends the married state (Gen 1:18-24; 1 Cor 7:2-9), it also affirms the value of godly singleness (Matt 19:10-12; 1 Cor 7:25-38). Jesus himself remained celibate, and everyone — even those without the gift of lifelong celibacy (1 Cor 7:7) — experiences seasons of singleness. Jesus’s example demonstrates that a single person can live a completely fulfilled life.

Since God established marriage as a lifelong union, divorce never accords with his perfect will (Matt 19:4-6). Christians should bear with one another, forgive one another, and, whenever possible, seek reconciliation to preserve the marriage covenant (Rom 12:18).

Nevertheless, because of human sinfulness, God has graciously made concessions for divorce in certain cases. When a person is the wronged party in a case of sexual immorality (Matt 5:31-32; Matt 19:9) or when an unbeliever willfully abandons a believer (1 Cor 7:15-16) — the Bible permits, though it never mandates, divorce.

Those who seek divorce without biblical grounds should first be admonished and, if necessary, subjected to the disciplinary process of the local church.¹ Church discipline is intended to bring about repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation (Matt 18:15-20) and to serve as a warning for others (1 Tim 5:21; Acts 5:1-11).

While we acknowledge that divorce without biblical grounds is sin, we also affirm that God graciously forgives unrighteousness — divorce included — remembering that “mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jas 2:13).

Pastors should make clear, both in their public preaching and private counsel, that all forms of abuse are sin. Wherever appropriate, it should be made an occasion for church discipline. In cases of extreme abuse or physical danger, persons are admonished to seek a place of safety. Churches are encouraged to do whatever they can to provide refuge and support (Prov 24:11-12). Some cases may warrant either a temporary or long-term and potentially legal separation.

In all circumstances, Christians should seek biblically informed pastoral counsel before contemplating a divorce.

Some Scriptures place significant restrictions on remarriage after divorce (Deut 24:1-4; Luke 16:18). Nevertheless, we believe ministers may, at their discretion, solemnize a remarriage if the previously divorced persons had a biblical reason for their divorce, live demonstrably Christian lives, and intend a genuinely Christian marriage (Matt 5:32, 19:9;

¹ See Article XVII of the *Constitution of the Missionary Church*.

1 Cor 7:15). Ministers need to carefully consider other factors, including whether reconciliation with a previous spouse is possible and advisable, and whether the persons were believers at the time of their

divorce (Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17).

Children are commanded to honor (Eph 6:1–2) and obey (Col 3:20) their parents. Following their heavenly Father, earthly fathers in particular are exhorted to gently shepherd their children, neither exasperating nor embittering them (Isa 40:11; Col 3:21). The Bible calls parents to bring their children up in the “discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).

Because the home provides the primary place to disciple children in the faith, we urge churches to promote healthy families where parents teach Christian truth and cultivate and model Christian character. Since God loves children and desires to bless them and have them know him (Matt 19:13–14), we encourage the formal dedication of children to the Lord in a public service in the local church. We also encourage churches to commit themselves to disciple children by clearly communicating the gospel to them and diligently teaching them the Word of God (2 Tim 3:14-16).

Practicing Stewardship

God calls us to lives of faithful stewardship. Since God creates and sustains all things, everything ultimately belongs to him. As those who have been redeemed by the very blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:18-19), Christians owe a debt they can never repay. Nonetheless, out of gratitude, they offer their very selves to him in worship (Rom 12:1-2).

All that we have — natural abilities, spiritual gifts, material possessions, time, and our physical bodies — are gifts from God (Jas 1:17). We hold these things in trust, as stewards rather than owners. We must use these resources for God’s glory and the good of others, as those who must ultimately give an account of ourselves to God (Rom 14:12).

This principle extends to the created world as well, as we honor our Creator by caring for his creation. While God gave human beings dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26), he also gave them the command to work and take care of the Garden (Gen 2:15). We care for creation as the image-bearers of God, who providentially sustains his creation now (Ps 104; Matt 10:29), and who will one day free it from the decay incurred in the Fall and bring it to its intended glory (Rom 8:20-21; Rev 21:1-4).

Faithful stewardship also entails glad generosity. The obligation to live generously is rooted in God’s generous nature and in his command that we imitate him (Eph 5:1-2). It is also undergirded by a biblical principle: “Whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Cor 9:6). God’s people are directed to give to the needy (Deut 15:7-11; Prov 19:17; Eph 4:28) and to support those who give full-time attention to ministry (Lev 7:28-36; Num 18:8-20; 1 Cor 9:1-18; Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17). The biblical principle of “firstfruits giving” (Gen 4:4; Lev 23:9-14; 1 Cor 16:2) teaches us to make giving a priority. Giving should also be sacrificial (Lev 2:1, 3:1; 2 Sam 24:24) and proportionate to our income (1 Cor 16:2). God intends us to give, not merely out of duty, but in joyful worship, for he loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7). The tithe — a law that was binding on God’s people in the Old Testament — continues to provide a valuable benchmark for New Testament believers today.

Our earthly citizenship is likewise a matter of stewardship. God has providentially placed his people within cultures so that they might exert a redemptive influence (Matt 5:14-16; Acts 17:26-27). Where citizens have been entrusted with the gift of participatory government, they may freely seek active political involvement. This may include engaging in civil discourse, voting, or seeking office at various levels of government. In doing so, believers may promote the common good and bring the light of the gospel and the influence of biblical principles into the public square.

We believe that God has established civil government for humanity’s benefit (Rom 13:1-4; 1 Pet 2:13-14), and that its duties of promoting and protecting good and restraining and punishing evil are divinely ordained. Christians are instructed to pray for all those who exercise civil authority over them (1 Tim 2:1-4). They are also called to render appropriate loyalty, respect, and obedience (Rom 13:5-7). Where the dictates of civil law contradict God’s revealed will in Scripture, Christians must choose to “obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29).

We believe that the Bible commands believers to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate them, to overcome evil with good, and to live at peace with everyone, whenever possible (Matt 5:43-48; Rom 12:21, 12:18). Though we affirm that Christians may defend themselves when necessary (Exod 22:2-3; Luke 22:36), and that they should seek to rescue the defenseless (Prov 24:10-12), they must never promote strife between individuals, groups, races, classes, and

nations. Furthermore, they should pursue harmony and reconciliation in every relationship — whether personal or public.

The persistence of strife and warfare, however, is a result of the fallen human condition. Since government has a mandate to protect life and preserve peace (Rom 13:2-4), we believe that a Christian may, with a clear conscience, participate in duly authorized armed forces (Luke 3:13-14). We also recognize that the practice of non-resistance has a long and distinguished history in the Church. Therefore, individuals may, for the sake of conscience, refuse to participate in armed conflict.

Finally, we believe a Christian's life should be so transparent in its honesty and integrity that one's word can be fully trusted without the swearing of formal oaths (Matt 5:36-37; Jas 5:12). Nonetheless, a judicial oath may be sworn or affirmed without violation of the Scriptures (Rom 13:1).

Seeking Justice

God calls us to live justly. Justice is an attribute of God himself (Gen 18:25; Deut 32:4; Isa 61:8). It ought, therefore, to characterize his children. Micah declares:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.
(Mic 6:8)

Our personal dealings should exhibit a commitment to the Golden Rule: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt 7:12).

We also have an obligation to pursue justice in the public sphere. In every time and culture, Christians must recognize that God's Word alone determines what is just. We have a personal responsibility to embrace biblical values and to work toward their implementation in the broader culture. We do acknowledge, however, that while the Bible sets forth timeless principles and priorities, it rarely prescribes specific political policies. The pursuit of justice is a clear and necessary implication of the gospel and its inevitable complement. We affirm with the Scriptures that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas 2:17).

Every person bears the image of God (Gen 1:27, 9:6; Jas 3:9). Therefore, we strenuously oppose abortion, euthanasia, as well as racism, sexism, and any other ideology or behavior that demeans, degrades, or defiles other human beings.

Personal and institutional racism is fundamentally an affront against the image of God in human beings. It also runs contrary to God's intention to create one universal, multiethnic, believing community comprised of members "from every nation, tribe, people and language" who join together in worship of God and the Lamb (Rev 7:9-10).

Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are particularly destructive forms of sexual sin since they degrade and damage other bearers of God's image.

Throughout the Scriptures, in both his words and deeds, God demonstrates his concern for the vulnerable, the helpless, and the defenseless. He cares for the orphan and widow (Ps 68:5), for the poor and oppressed (Ps 140:12), and for the sojourner² (Ps 146:9 ESV). He expects his people to do the same, defending and

caring for the most vulnerable among us, including the refugee, the immigrant, the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, and the terminally ill (Exod 22:21-22; Prov 24:11-12, 31:8-9; Matt 25:31-46; Jas 1:27; 1 John 3:17-18).

Finally, we would do well to remember that we ourselves are sojourners here. Our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), and we look forward “to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). Yet we are also called to “shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15) as we “seek the peace and prosperity” of the cities to which we have been called (Jer 29:7). Thus, we will pursue justice with great diligence. While some of the world’s ills can be

²English has no suitable, single equivalent to translate the Hebrew. A *sojourner* (*ger*) is one lying outside a kinship or social group, a defenseless “outsider.”

alleviated, we also recognize that, while we wait for the perfect to appear (1 Cor 13:10), believers will experience unjust suffering (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 2:12, 4:5; 1 Pet 2:19-20; Rev 2:3). Evil will never be fully vanquished until our Savior comes in glorious power and puts every enemy beneath his feet (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:23-25). “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).