



Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church

STATEMENT OF CONVICTION

Originally adopted by Council on:

August 22, 2011 (The Sacraments)
November 28, 2011 (Language for God)
April 23, 2012 (Offices of the Church)
January 25, 2016 (Marriage)
August 15, 2016 (Human Sexuality)

Reaffirmed most recently by Council on:

August 27, 2018

We believe it to be God's will for our local church to be an instrument of Biblical and confessional leadership, as well as preserving sound doctrine and life (**1 Timothy 4:16; Romans 16:17**).

We seek to affirm our belief in the Word of God and the historic Reformed faith as expressed in the Three-Forms of Unity – *Belgic Confession*, *Heidelberg Catechism*, and the *Canons of Dort*. While not requiring subscription to this "Statement of Conviction," it gives indication to the congregation and the broader Christian community how Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church will be led. We affirm and commit our convictions in light of this belief as follows:

The Sacraments

WE AFFIRM:

1. That Christ has instituted two sacraments for His church: baptism and the Lord's Supper so that by our faithful use of them He might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel, and put His seal on that promise.
2. That Baptism should be given to believers and their children as a sign and seal of their initiation into the covenant community in keeping with God's gracious and covenantal dealings with sinners saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ **Genesis 17; Romans 4:9-11; Galatians 3:26-29; Isaiah 44:1-3; Acts 2:38, 39; Acts 10:47; Acts 16:31; Colossians 2: 11; I Corinthians 10:1, 2; I Corinthians 7:14; Matthew 28:18-21.**
3. That the Lord's Supper should be observed repeatedly by all those who have publicly professed their faith in Jesus Christ as the only One who can save them from their sins; showing that they are truly sorry for their sins and earnestly desire to lead a godly, holy life in Christ and having properly examined themselves, their faith, hope, and love for God and neighbor as revealed in **I Corinthians 11:23-29.**

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To faithfully administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
2. To do all that we can with the help of the Holy Spirit to teach covenant children, and others, the meaning of their baptism, the privileges and responsibilities of covenant life with God, and the necessity of giving their lives to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.
3. To discern age- and ability-appropriate faith through the process of public profession of faith under the direction and encouragement of the elders. **(Church Order, art. 59a)**
4. To encourage repentant sinners who trust in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness and righteousness, to come gladly to the table of our Lord.
5. To warn any unrepentant sinner and those who willfully continue in sin, and/or unbelief, to keep themselves from the table of the Lord until they are first reconciled to God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Language for God

WE AFFIRM:

1. That God alone has the sole right and authority to tell us how He ought to be addressed by His church.
2. That persons of the Trinity receive masculine reference in the Scriptures not as a result of a cultural bias of a previous age, but because this is how God chooses to reveal and characterize Himself.
Matthew 6:9, Luke 1:34,35; John 4:23,24; Matthew 3:16-17.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To uphold the full revelation of God, and to seek to understand carefully all that He has revealed about Himself in the Scriptures, including His character, His attributes, and His names and not changing them to reflect gender neutral title in reference to God... In the manner He has revealed Himself.
2. To be mindful, honoring, and respectful of the way God has characterized Himself in His Word in our prayers, writings, speech, teaching, preaching, and educational material. To this end, we will use the English translation of the *Belgic Confession* from 1985, the *Canons of Dordt* from 1986, and the *Heidelberg Catechism* from 1975 (updated 1988) in our preaching and teaching.

The Offices of the Church

WE AFFIRM:

1. That men and women equally bear the image of God and are to serve Him with all their complementary gifts according to His calling in their lives.
2. That from creation men were given authority for headship in the family and in the church.
3. That Christ honored and respected women while on this earth and continues to equip them for high calling in His church today.
4. That Christ, as He makes clear in His Word, does not call women to the authoritative offices in the church, and therefore the church may not ordain them to these offices.
5. That the high calling for women in the church must be guided solely by the Word of God and never by mere social factors; such as feminism, bigotry, male-chauvinism, or sheer tradition.
6. That the purpose of the spiritual gifts given to men and women in Christ is never self-fulfillment but service to others; to the end that God receives all the glory.
7. That Christ rules His church through the officers He calls to govern it according to the regulations of His Word. ***1 Timothy 2&3; Titus 1; 1 Corinthians 14; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 31; Acts of Synod 1997 pp. 505-508, 513-516, Acts of Synod 2000, 2005***

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To identify, nurture and use the gifts and abilities of all of God's people—men, women, and our youth—in complementary ways according to the Word of God and for the good of God's kingdom and His people.
2. To preserve the holiness and authority of the offices of the church in accord with the Word of God.

Marriage

WE AFFIRM:

1. Marriage was instituted by God at creation – and affirmed by Jesus Christ – as a life-long, exclusive, covenantal relationship of love and faithfulness between one man and one woman. ***Genesis 2:18, 22-23; Matthew 19:5-6***
2. The union of husband and wife in marriage is a symbol and illustration of the union between Christ and His church. ***Ephesians 5:31-32***
3. For marriage to be pleasing in the sight of God, those who enter into this covenant of life must share a common commitment to the Lord of life. ***II Corinthians 6:14***
4. As long-term members of the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA), we affirm the position of the CRCNA that “marriage is an institution created by God. It is a covenant relationship established by mutual vows between a man and a woman united by God. Permanent unity in marriage is possible in Christ and is demanded of Christ’s disciples who are married.” **The position statement and all actions of synod upon which it is based are referenced at www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/marriage.**
5. A civil government’s sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of “marriage” found in Scripture as stated here.
6. God hates divorce because it mars His image and causes devastation for both husband and wife, as well as children, family, the church, and community. However, where marital faithfulness has been broken, God makes provision for divorce because of the sinfulness and hardness of our hearts and the brokenness of our world. ***Deuteronomy 24:4; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:1-9***

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To strengthen God-ordained marriages through the various ministries of the church.
2. To require and provide for thorough, biblical premarital counseling for all members seeking to be married.
3. To allow our staff and facilities to be used only in accordance with this statement of conviction.
4. To disciple and encourage those who are struggling in their marriage covenant to greater love and faithfulness.
5. To challenge and discipline those who are unfaithful to their marriage covenant and in all ways seek forgiveness and reconciliation of husband and wife as far as it depends on us.
6. To minister to and support those who suffer the consequences of broken marriage to bring healing and restoration.

Human Sexuality

WE AFFIRM:

1. God created human sexuality good and as an expression of His own image in humanity. However, since every aspect of our humanity has been affected by the fall, so has our sexuality and therefore in its brokenness we dishonor God and hurt one another. **Genesis 1:26-31, 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-5; Mark 10:7; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:31**
2. Sexual sin hinders our relationship with God Himself in a particularly devastating way and all who engage in sexual sin must be clearly and consistently called – like all sinners – to repentance and faith. **I Corinthians 6:9-10, 18-20; Matthew 5:8; Psalm 24:3-4**
3. In terms of same-sex attraction, that “homosexuality is a condition of disordered sexuality that reflects the brokenness of our sinful world.” Homosexual desires and actions in any context, whether promiscuous relations or committed relationships, are a result of the fall and are sinful. **Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:24-27**
4. That believers who struggle against same-sex attraction, like all Christians, are called to discipleship, holy obedience, and the use of their gifts in the cause of the kingdom.
5. Through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and working of the Holy Spirit God is bringing forgiveness, restoration, and healing to His children – including our sexuality. **Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18**
6. The core identity of a believer is found primarily in Christ, not in an individual's sexuality, gender, or any other distinguishing characteristic. **Romans 8:16-17; II Corinthians 1:21-22**

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

1. To compassionately walk alongside those who genuinely struggle against sexual temptation – including same-sex attraction; graciously encouraging them in holiness and enfolding them as part of the body of Christ.
2. To challenge and discipline those who engage in or approve of sexual immorality, including, but not limited to adultery, fornication (sex-before-marriage), homosexual practice, pornography, etc., as it is incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Scripture.
3. To boldly proclaim the Word of God in truth and love in our midst and into our society so God may be glorified in our sexuality.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS STATEMENT

1. Our aim is to embrace and teach the whole counsel of God and to encourage an adherence to Biblical truth. We believe Biblical truth stabilizes the church against every wind of doctrine and promotes God's glory.
2. We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, seeking the unity of that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries.
3. We hold firmly to these truths as we see in them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture.

This Statement of Conviction is to be discussed and voted upon by each subsequent Council within three months of the ordination and installation of newly selected office-bearers.