



Commitments

Adopted by the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church on August 14, 2012.

Commitments

These Biblical principles drive our mission and influence every aspect of our work:

1. The Necessity of Conversion

Man is conceived in sin and born an enemy of God, under sentence of death and Hell. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not save him. His parents' faith and his own good deeds do not save him. The sinner's prayer or membership in a particular church do not save him. Rather, man is made acceptable to God when he is born again of the Holy Spirit, repents of his sin, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Necessity of Faith in Jesus Christ

There is no way to be reconciled to God apart from living faith in Jesus Christ alone. When a man repents and believes in Jesus Christ, he is justified once and for all. But saving faith is no mere mental assent. Rather, true faith transforms lives and produces fruit. Always.

3. The Necessity of Personal Holiness

It is the nature of true faith to bear good fruit in the lives of believers as they walk according to the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible makes it clear that without such holiness no one will see God (Heb. 12:14). This does not mean that we can become sinless in this life, but it does mean that we will make progress as we live our lives in imitation of Jesus. Yes, we fail. Yet despite our failures, the work of the Holy Spirit is apparent in the life of every true believer, making him holy as God is holy.

4. The Power of the Holy Spirit

Because we are born depraved sinners, we need God to intervene in our lives. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit that we repent and believe in Jesus. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we walk in obedience to God. It is only through His indwelling presence that we are able to have fellowship with God. And it is only by His guidance that we are granted wisdom to understand and apply the Scriptures.

5. The Power and Sufficiency of Scripture

Although the knowledge of God we receive through nature is enough to condemn us, it is not enough to lead us to salvation. Praise God, He has not left us ignorant but has spoken to us in the Bible. The Bible is no ordinary piece of literature. It is God's Word, and it is powerful, clear, authoritative, without error, and sufficient for all we need to know to believe on Jesus Christ and to live a godly life.

6. The Centrality of the Local Church

The local church is at the heart of the life and mission of the Christian. It is the household to which every Christian belongs. Like any household, each church has her failures. Nevertheless the Christian is commanded by God not to forsake the assembly. The early church father, Cyprian, warned no one can have God as his Father who refuses to have the Church as his mother. Down through the centuries, church fathers (including John Calvin) have repeated this warning: ordinarily, there is no possibility of salvation outside the Church (WCF 25.2).

Unity within the local church is not an optional element of church life, rather it is Jesus Christ's will for His Bride: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:22-23). All members of the church are called to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The ordained leaders of the church, the elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-10. 12-13; Titus 1:5-9)—and their wives (1 Tim. 3:12)—are to exemplify this commitment to the church's peace and purity.

7. The Centrality of True Preaching

True preaching is neither a lecture nor a motivational pep talk. God's spokesman is not to suggest things for the congregation's consideration. He does not submit theories to the congregation for their evaluation. Rather, he proclaims God's truth, making piercing applications of that truth to the consciences of particular people. In the Name of Jesus Christ, he commands men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and, believing, to understand and obey every word recorded in Scripture. God's Word is both a hammer and a healing balm, so the preaching of it should lead God's people to fear and to love Him, to sobriety and comfort as we face our sinfulness. We are committed to preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). No Scripture at any time is to be rejected because it rubs cultural sensitivities the wrong way. In fact, it is precisely at those points where we need God's Word to wake us from our slumber (Eph. 5:13-16).

8. The Centrality of True Pastoral Care

Faithful pastors and shepherds are not defined by their Sunday morning sermon, but by their 24/7 faithful care for the sheep God has given them charge over. Biblical churches are not preaching points, but households of faith, and the fathers of the household serve the family as spiritual fathers. Thus pastors must have constant interaction with the souls in their flock. Pastors will soon give an account to God for their care for those for whom Christ died and such care must spring from an intimate knowledge of church members, applying God's Word to specific individuals by teaching, exhorting, and encouraging them "from house to house," "day and night, with tears" (Acts 20).

9. The Necessity of the Faithful Exercise of Church Discipline

Because of the godless abuses of the church during their time, the Reformers of the sixteenth-century were forced to think about what distinguished a true church from a false church. They identified three necessary marks of the true church: the pure preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the sacraments, and the faithful exercise of church discipline. Though all of these marks are increasingly hard to see in the evangelical church today, the last meets with outright resistance. To forsake faithful church discipline is no less than for the church to forsake the task of shepherding souls (Heb. 13:17, 2 Tim. 4:2, Acts 20:31). This faithful discipline begins with regularly sitting under the preaching of God's Word, involves the self-discipline of confessing our sins to one another (James 5:16) and pursuing holiness (2 Cor. 7:1), and, when necessary, involves formal admonition, suspension, or excommunication by the church session. The purpose of every element of discipline is threefold: the glory of God, the purity of His Church, and the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners (BCO 30-3).

10. The Call to Stand in the Gap

There has never been a time or place in the history of the Church when God's truth has not been under attack. Although it is true there are no new heresies, each generation has its own battles. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament must be trained to cultivate their ability to recognize where God's enemies currently seek to destroy the faith, piety, and happiness of God's adopted children. Shepherds must stand precisely at those points, contending for the faith with humility and courage. What today's "gap issues" are may be found on pages 6-9 of this document.

11. The Call to Evangelism

Jesus commanded His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19, 20a). This means that evangelism is the work of God's church, an inescapable call that is at the heart of all Christian obedience.

By Jesus' definition, true evangelism calls men and women to become Christ's disciples, to be baptized in God's Triune Name, and to live a new life of obedience. It does not call souls to a cheap intellectual assent to propositional truth, but to the life of Christian faith that is always growing in obedience and holiness.

12. The Importance of Doctrine

As it's commonly used and understood today, the saying "Christ unites, doctrine divides" is false. Jesus is not opposed to doctrine, nor is there any possibility of Christian unity outside of submission to the specific doctrines taught in the Bible. We hold to the most widely used doctrinal summary of Scripture's truths in the English-speaking world, the *Westminster Standards*. We believe true Christian unity has the greatest hope of prevailing as churches join in affirming these doctrines. The *Westminster Standards* are unabashedly Reformed confessions. Reformed doctrines must not be a wispy part of the teaching and preaching ministries of the church but must be the foundation of all we do as a church. In order for the church to grow spiritually, she must be "constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6b).

13. The Importance of Contextualization without Compromise

God's truth is not bound to any particular culture. It is our work to proclaim God's truth faithfully, uncompromisingly, and unashamedly in a way that is understandable to our hearers. At the same time, we must never pander to the world by cutting out, minimizing, or avoiding any aspect of God's truth to make it more palatable to anyone. The Gospel transcends all cultures and is universally countercultural.

14. The Importance of Biblical Worship

God has told us how He would have us worship Him in His Word. We are committed to following Scripture's commands for worship and, thereby, necessarily committed to rejecting extra-Biblical demands on worship. God has commanded us to sing, for example, but He has not defined a particular style or instrumentation for such music. Believing worship music is bound to a particular style or particular instruments is in itself a violation of the "Regulative Principle of Worship;" to bind worship in that way is to elevate non-Scriptural preferences to the level of Scriptural commands. We are committed therefore to a diversity of styles—including (but not limited to) chant, hymnody, folk, and bluegrass—and a diversity of instruments—including (but not limited to) organ, piano, keyboard, strings, acoustic and electric guitars, and percussion. All should be done for the edification of the congregation and the glory of God.

15. The Training of the Next Generation of the Church and Her Leaders

Just as the parents of Israel were commanded to pass on all they had learned to their children (Deut. 6:7), so the church today must be handing on the “faith once delivered” (Jude 3) to her children. With this commitment comes a desire to seek after, minister to, and mentor younger families and individuals. This work, though focused on raising up the younger generations, involves all generations of the church. In order to mentor there must be mentors; in order to hand on the faith to coming generations there must be zealous and faithful older men and women committed to handing it on. Dedication to this commitment will be seen in very tangible ways in the life of our body: from service in nursery, to evangelism in local schools, to teaching and discipling in a number of different venues (Sunday school, youth group), to the older women mentoring younger women and older men mentoring younger men, to teaching parents how to shepherd their children’s hearts, to the practical training of men called to the ordained offices.

16. The Support of Like-Minded Ministries

Believing that the commitments of our church are important because they are Biblical, we seek to support ministries, churches, missionary organizations, and missionaries that share our fundamental commitments. These like-minded ministries will be understood to be extensions of our local preaching and teaching ministries (2 Tim. 2:2). To see more about our missionary support priorities, please turn to pages 10 & 11 of this document.

Gap Issues

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point. – Elizabeth Rundle Charles said of Martin Luther in The Chronicles of Schoenberg-Cotta Family

In battle, the breach in the wall is the point at which the enemy has concentrated his attack and has gained a foothold. Faithful soldiers flock to the gap, ready to stand firm and defend the fortress while cowards flee. In the days of Athanasius, the battle raged over the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ. While others fled, Athanasius stood in the gap and contended for the faith. In the days of Augustine, the gap issue was original sin. While the world followed after Pelagius, Augustine relentlessly contended for the truth. In the time of the Reformation, men like Calvin and Luther contended with the Roman Catholic Church for the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And in the time of Machen, the battle was engaged over the authority and inspiration of Scripture.

Each of these conflicts arose from pervasive, demonic heresy inside the Church—that is, from among God’s own people. And God used each of these conflicts to purify His Church and to clarify what the Bible teaches. That this kind of attack is constantly coming from inside the church should be no surprise to us, as the Apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

Heeding the Apostle Paul’s warning, each of these men recognized the points where God’s enemies were attacking His truth and they were faithful to contend for the faith. In their day, they stood alone—abandoned and ostracized. We are called to nothing less. If we are to follow in their footsteps, we must not pretend that there are no more savage wolves among the flock, or men in the church speaking perverse things.

Today the church is facing an attack on the doctrine of man. It is a subtle attack, and it has crept into the church virtually unnoticed. This makes it particularly dangerous. Many souls have been led astray by false teachers in our midst. Therefore, anyone who desires to be a

faithful shepherd of God's flock must publicly stand and fight for the truth of this doctrine.

God has inextricably bound our understanding of ourselves with our understanding of Him. As such, we can't understand one without understanding the other. As John Calvin observes, "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."

For this reason, the doctrine of man is central to the Christian faith. Failing to understand it destroys our ability to see the connection between who God is and who He made us to be. This, in turn, distorts our understanding of how we are to relate to one another. In other words, if we lose the doctrine of man, we also end up losing both the doctrine of God and all practical Christian obedience.

Because the doctrine of man bears on almost every major issue in the church, it has massive implications concerning what our practice teaches the watching world about God. Consider the relevance of the following issues:

Abortion, Infanticide, and Euthanasia. From the point of conception—that is, the point of fertilization—man is given the honor of bearing God's image and this distinguishes us from all other parts of God's creation. In other words, man is not endowed with humanity by virtue of his mental or physical capacities, but ontologically—by virtue of his being. For this reason, abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are all forms of murder. And murder in all its forms, is an assault on God Himself.

Fornication, Adultery, and Divorce. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden, He blessed them with a mysterious one-flesh union. This union was intended from the very beginning to be a picture showing us the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. This is why fornication, adultery, and divorce are so heinous. They are not merely sins against others. They are blasphemous lies about Jesus and the covenant relationship He shares with the Church.

Headship and Submission. The relationship between a man and his wife is to be a reflection of Christ's relationship with His Church. Scripture commands husbands to love, provide for, protect, and lay their lives down for their wives. Similarly, wives are commanded to honor, respect, and obey their husbands. None of this is optional. It is fundamental Christian obedience that is explicitly commanded in Scripture and flows directly from the gospel. If we reject these commands, we are de-

spising Jesus, His sacrificial love for His Bride, and the Church's response of honor, respect, and submission to Christ.

Fatherhood and Fatherlessness. When God made Adam, He imprinted on him the nature of His own perfect Fatherhood. God, our true Father, rules over his creation with all authority and with tender care. For men, this imprint of divine Fatherhood comes with both authority and responsibility in every realm of human existence. And just as husbands who refuse to love their wives lie about Christ's love for the church, men who refuse to be godly fathers lie about God the Father. The lack of godly fathers in Christian homes and in the church has left us with a culture of orphans and illegitimate children struggling to understand God's fatherly goodness.

Mary Daly, a feminist scholar, once said, "The bible is hopelessly patriarchal." She is right. Every page of Scripture is saturated with the Fatherhood of God. It is the foundational doctrine on which all theology rests. Jesus taught us to pray to our Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:9). The Spirit causes us to cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15). The importance of the Fatherhood of God can't be overstated. The world and devil know this to be true. This is why there is an unrelenting attack of the Fatherhood of God today. With such an attack, there should be a corresponding response: a robust, wholesome, lived, demonstrated, unembarrassed embrace of God's Fatherhood. The Fatherhood of God is imprinted everywhere on God's creation (Eph. 3:14-15) and will be a healing balm to a society that rejects fatherly authority. This commitment to fatherhood means far more than men merely holding the ordained offices of the church; it means that the men of the church will be called upon to defend, govern, and cherish those under their authority. In such a context, the beauty, glory, and particular strength of Biblical femininity will flourish.

Sexuality. God exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit—distinct in their personhood, one in nature, and fulfilling different functions. From the beginning, God made man male and female. There is a reason why God did not give Adam a dog or another man for his helper. Somehow, this is a reflection of God's relationship with Himself as the Triune God. God made Eve from Adam's flesh, and He made her with corresponding parts and corresponding abilities. More than that, God gave them each distinct responsibilities that are based on their sex. This means that sexuality is biological in nature—it is not a function of societal constructs, but a function of God's good creation. And so it is also meant to teach us about God. All ways of rejecting this basic reality of human existence—sodomy, lesbianism, transsexuality, bisexuality, bestiality—fundamentally deny what it means

to be created "male and female", and consequently, what it means to be made in God's image.

Fruitfulness and Contraception. When God made Adam and Eve, He commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply." In the same way that God, from the abundance of His love, created the earth, mankind was intended to procreate. This is one of the primary reasons that God gave us the gift of sex. This becomes more evident when we look at the relationship between Jesus and the Church: the "fruit" of their love is spiritual children. This does not mean that contraception is always and necessarily wrong in all circumstances, but it does teach us that contrary to popular opinion, children are the fruit of a loving and healthy marriage and a blessing from God that we are commanded to seek.

When God made man in His own image He wrote deep and profound truths about who He is into our very nature. When He wrote Fatherhood into Adam's nature, He wrote of Himself. When He made Adam and Eve in the Garden, He wrote mysteries into their relationship that are really about who He is, how He relates to Himself, and how He relates to His people. When He held Adam accountable for the sin in the Garden and punished mankind in Adam as our federal head, He laid the foundation for the work of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, in whom we find redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And when God made man male and female, He defined the most basic category of human existence: our sexuality. We process everything we do (consciously or unconsciously) through our sexuality, including how we are to obey God. Without the doctrine of man, we have no gospel.

Unfortunately, in our day we have cultivated a willful blindness to the connections between the doctrine of man, Christian obedience, and the doctrine of God. And not content to be blind ourselves, we have even changed our Bible translations to hide these truths from others. We have made peace with Satan and the world. But there is no peace. This blindness is destroying our churches, our families, and our culture.

The church today needs faithful men who will stand firmly on the biblical doctrine of man, contending for the faith—men who, as the fathers and husbands God created them to be, will rise up to protect the souls that are being led astray. This is the breach in the wall.

Missions at Trinity

Trinity's priorities for our missions program are as follows:

1. **THE CHURCH IS THE GOAL:** Support missionaries who are planting churches, growing churches through front-line evangelism, or training indigenous leaders for existing churches.

Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

2. **DO, AS WELL SUPPORT:** Short-term local and domestic mission trips for our members (Trinity Child Rescue, SCBEST, street evangelism, booths at festivals and county fairs, short-term domestic missions).

James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

3. **REMEMBER DOMESTIC WORKS:** Particularly college campuses, abortuaries, and other local front-lines.

Acts 1:8b and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

4. **SUPPORT THEOLOGICALLY AND MINISTERIALLY LIKE-MINDED MISSIONARIES:** Understand missions as an outgrowth of our church and her priorities, so support missionaries who could in good conscience affirm our Commitments.

2Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

5. **SUPPORT FEWER MISSIONARIES AT MORE SIGNIFICANT LEVELS:** Rather than spreading our resources broadly but thinly, we will seek to support fewer missionaries with more significant levels of money and attention.

Phil. 4:15 You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than

once for my needs. 17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.