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# STAYING ON MISSION

A Guideline for How Alliance Churches Respond  
to *Obergefell v. Hodges*

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The Christian and Missionary Alliance

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# STAYING ON MISSION

## A Guideline for How Alliance Churches Respond to *Obergefell v. Hodges*

### INTRODUCTION

The Supreme Court ruled on June 26, 2015, that states must license same-sex marriages and recognize such licenses issued by other states. Some Alliance churches have already taken steps to address this issue, while others are still in process. Wherever your church may be in addressing this ruling, this document will help your leadership respond effectively.

It is important that Alliance pastors and church leaders know what the *Obergefell* decision means for the ministry of the local church. Perhaps unlike any other legal decision in our generation, *Obergefell* has the potential to distract and derail a church.

A 5–4 majority of the Supreme Court justices found in the U.S. Constitution a brand new fundamental right for same-sex marriage. Their decision was written in such a way that legally it bears directly on the government and its officials only. Culturally, however, its impact is far more comprehensive. The majority decision affirmed the right of religious groups to hold and advocate for traditional morality. However, it did not directly affirm the right to “exercise” one’s religious beliefs. Leaders in business, government, education, entertainment, and other areas of society may use the decision as a basis for declining to engage or do business with traditional Christian groups.

Although the ruling is regrettable, it presents every Alliance church with two opportunities. The first is to learn more deeply what it means to love our neighbors with the love of Christ. For a broad look

### THREE KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The decision does not require Alliance pastors to marry same-sex couples.
- The local church must have clear statements related to marriage, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- Position statements on marriage, sexual orientation, and gender identity must be consistent with your church’s actions, ministries, and activities.

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at what love means within The Alliance, view President Stumbo's **presentation** at the 2015 General Council. In terms of how we show Christian love to our LGBT neighbors, we recommend a **sermon** delivered on May 24, 2015, by Rev. Mark E. Ashton, an Alliance pastor at Christ Community Church in Omaha, Nebraska.

The second opportunity is to be a clear witness for God's truth. The world doesn't need love at the expense of truth any more than it needs truth at the expense of love. As the Body of Christ and the embodiment of His Kingdom in our communities, we are called to be agents of the very truth that every person desperately needs. This combination of love and truth can be described as "humble orthodoxy." *We must offer the deeply held and long-believed truths of Scripture with humility and grace.*

Your legal team at the C&MA National Office will continue to work arm-in-arm with other like-minded denominations and groups to limit the legal impact of this decision on our churches.

Your local church will likely experience increased pressure to conform to cultural expectations in three areas:

- Restrictions on core religious practices and certain government benefits. While the decision does not require pastors to marry same-sex couples, there will be increased challenges to any restrictions on facility use and the refusal to employ people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT)<sup>1</sup> community. This decision also will fuel the argument that charitable donation deductions, property tax exemptions, clergy housing allowances, and other government "benefits" for religious nonprofits should be eliminated.
- Character/repute. Evangelical Christianity will be increasingly viewed as out of step with culture. As a result, evangelical Christians and churches will be looked upon with increasing disfavor.
- Biblical values. Christians and the local church will be pressured to compromise on our long and deeply held biblical values. Some evangelical churches are now rethinking traditional views on marriage, sexuality, and gender issues. Alliance churches too will face this temptation. Dr. Brian G. Mattson, senior scholar of Public Theology for the Center for Cultural Leadership, offers insight on this temptation in his Web post, "**The Family's Fair-Weather Friends, Part 1.**"

The remainder of this document will be divided into three parts: Understanding the **context** of the court's decision, outlining **action items** every local Alliance church can take, and looking briefly at how this decision may impact our **related Alliance entities**, such as schools, retirement communities, and camps.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, the terms "gay and/or lesbian" are used to describe anyone who identifies as part of the LGBT community.

## OUR CONTEXT

LGBT rights in general, and same-sex marriage in particular, are—to say the least—a very recent phenomenon. Justice Roberts noted in his dissent that, “For all millennia, across all those civilizations, ‘marriage’ referred to only one relationship: the union of a man and woman.” He added that the petitioners themselves admitted that they were not aware of any society that permitted same-sex marriage before 2001.<sup>2</sup>

Led by Justice Kennedy, over the last few years the U.S. Supreme Court has issued a series of decisions that have reinforced the drastic changes in our long-established cultural norms for sexual and gender behavior. The views of the Supreme Court reflect our culture as a whole. This decision is the most recent, but not the last, in a line of decisions that consistently favor sexual and gender freedom.

In the United States, the church no longer represents the majority view regarding sexual conduct and gender issues. In sports terms, we are no longer the home team with a home-field advantage. We have joined the majority of cultures around the world and throughout history in which the voice of the Christian Church is a significant but minority view. The following chart illustrates and contrasts the divergence of social views between the traditional Christian view and that of the emerging culture.

### DIVERGING SOCIAL VIEWS

ISSUE	TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN VIEW	EMERGING CULTURAL VIEW
<i>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</i>	Distinguished from conduct	Inseparable from conduct
<i>SEXUAL CONDUCT</i>	Exclusively within marriage	Between consenting adults (and teens)
<i>MARRIAGE</i>	One man and one woman for life	Any two (or more) people until one person wants out
<i>GENDER IDENTITY</i>	Biological from conception	Fluid and chosen throughout life
<i>LIFE</i>	Always resolve doubt in favor of protecting life	Resolve doubt in favor of parental or societal interests
<i>RELIGION</i>	Public Moral right and wrong	Private Relativism; judging is arrogant

<sup>2</sup> *Obergefell v. Hodges*, Chief Justice C. J. Roberts Dissenting, 4.

As a church, we can anticipate that at least three trends will continue to develop:

- Only religious groups will impose restrictions based on beliefs about *sexual conduct*. Our culture as a whole will continue to move toward a “hands-off” approach to sexual activity of any sort (except in abuse situations).
- Only religious groups will embrace a distinction, based on their beliefs, between *sexual conduct* and *sexual orientation*—and any legal argument based on this distinction will likely lose. The commissioner of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) put it this way: “*It seems to me the height of disingenuousness, absurdity and indeed disrespect, to tell someone it is permissible to ‘be’ gay, but not permissible to engage in gay sex. What do they think being gay means?*”<sup>3</sup>
- Alliance churches will be able to continue teaching and practicing Alliance doctrine. The Supreme Court has continued to strengthen religious liberties for deeply held religious beliefs—particularly as these beliefs are taught and practiced within the four walls of a local church. However, the First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion will increasingly be privatized (*what you believe is fine for you...*) and confined to the institutional church.
  - **The *Obergefell* decision does not require an Alliance pastor to marry same-sex couples.** Credible voices on all sides of this issue believe that no pastor will be required to marry a same-sex couple if doing so is against the pastor’s deeply held religious beliefs. The Alliance statements on human sexuality and marriage are strong articulations of what we believe.
  - Christian organizations that are not local churches, such as our colleges, retirement homes, camps, etc., will be increasingly vulnerable to claims of sexual orientation discrimination. This will be discussed at the end of this writing.

It is in this cultural context that our Alliance churches must have a strong legal foundation on which they not only can safeguard but also accelerate our Spirit-filled mission *to be my [Christ’s] witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8). The next section outlines detailed steps for the local church to do just that.

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Laycock, Anthony R. Picarello Jr., and Robin Fretwell Wilson, eds. *Same-Sex Marriage and Religious Liberty: Emerging Conflicts* (United Kingdom: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 183.

## ACTION ITEMS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

To have a solid legal foundation for ministry in our rapidly changing culture, every Alliance church must know and document what The Alliance believes about marriage, sexuality, and gender issues and express those beliefs in the church's actual practice (how we *do church*).

### **A. Your church should clearly articulate and document what you believe about marriage, sexuality, and gender issues.**

First and foremost, this is a crucial time to be part of a denomination. Your church doesn't have to start from scratch or sift through materials from organizations outside The Alliance. **Our Statement of Faith** (see Attachment G) is built on 2,000 years of deeply held scriptural beliefs extending back to the first century of the Church. As The Alliance has faced new questions and challenges through the years, it has applied those beliefs through a variety of statements, policies, and other documents, which can now be directly applied to issues faced by your church. The following are a few of the beliefs expressed in our Alliance documents that address issues related to marriage, sexuality, and gender issues:

- *The entire Old and New Testaments are inerrant and are verbally inspired by God.* (C&MA Statement of Faith)
- *There is one God who exists eternally in three persons.* (C&MA Statement of Faith)
- *Christian understanding of identity is grounded on God's Word.* (**Statement on Human Sexuality**, see Attachment A)
- *God created humans male and female.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *Our sexuality is not the defining characteristic of our humanness, but is secondary to an individual's relationship with God.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *Marriage is rooted in Creation and is intended by God to be a lifelong union between one man and one woman.* (**Statement on Marriage—Divorce—Remarriage**, see Attachment B)
- *Marriage is the only context in which sexual relations are good, right, and proper.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *All sexual relationships outside marriage are condemned by Scripture.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *Sexual celibacy is a "worthy state" for unmarried adults.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *A church cannot welcome into membership a person who is engaged in a sexual relationship outside of biblical marriage.* (Statement on Human Sexuality)
- *God specifically prohibits homosexual conduct in Scripture.* (Statement on Human Sexuality; Statement on Marriage—Divorce—Remarriage)

- Any attempt to construct one's own sexual identity is morally objectionable and sinful. (Statement on Human Sexuality)

**If your church hasn't done so already, the following actions will strengthen the connection between your church and these core beliefs:**

1. Make sure that your church's corporate Articles and Bylaws state clearly that your church is part of the C&MA and subject to the denomination's beliefs. You will need to review your articles of incorporation, bylaws, and policies, to determine what is required for amendment. In most cases, the articles of incorporation and policies can be amended by the church governance authority, typically the elder board, while bylaw amendments require a vote of the entire church membership.

This Supreme Court decision provides an excellent opportunity to review and update your church's corporate documents in general, but the following language is essential.

Below are excerpts from the Model Restated Articles of Incorporation and Model Bylaws.

Key model article language:

*The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively as a member church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, a church denomination which operates legally as a Colorado nonprofit corporation (the "C&MA"). Accordingly, the Church shall operate under the sole ecclesiastical authority of, and be subject to the usages, doctrines and teachings of, the C&MA as set forth in The Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance; as such, the manual may be amended from time to time by the C&MA (the "Manual"). (E14-1, Section 2.1, see Attachment H)*

Key model bylaw language:

*The Church is an integral part of the district, national, and worldwide fellowship of The Christian and Missionary Alliance and is united in governance, fellowship, and service in order to promote unity of faith in the fullness of Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King, and to facilitate the spread of the gospel at home and abroad under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

*The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively as a member church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, a church denomination which operates legally as a Colorado nonprofit corporation (the "C&MA"). Accordingly, the Church shall operate under the sole ecclesiastical authority of, and be subject to the usages, doctrines and teachings of, the C&MA as set forth in The Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, as such, the Manual may be amended from time to time by the C&MA (the "Manual"). (E15-1, Preamble, see Attachment I)*

2. As a church governance authority, formally affirm the C&MA Statements on **Marriage—Divorce—Remarriage** and **Human Sexuality**. Although the above Articles of Incorporation and Bylaw language will create an organizational connection between the Statements and your church, formally affirming the Statements will create a clear record in your church that this is what you believe about the issues you are likely to face. These Statements provide your church with the scriptural clarity necessary to respond to anyone who has questions about what we believe.
3. Finally and importantly, as a church governance authority, formally adopt the model **Faith Community and Mission Policy** of the C&MA (see Attachment C). This means that the adoption of this policy is documented in the minutes of the meeting where adopted, with the text attached verbatim. This model policy is not part of the *C&MA Manual*, so to be effective it must be separately adopted by your church leadership team.

The policy was written because the local church is under increasing legal pressure not to discriminate in the use or availability of church facilities on the basis of sexual orientation, same sex marriage, gender identity, and other categories that are inconsistent with our sincerely held religious beliefs. This policy articulates the C&MA's sincerely held, long-standing beliefs and standards related to family, marriage, and gender roles; it provides guidelines to ensure that the use of church facilities is consistent with the expression of these beliefs. Connecting facility use guidelines to the C&MA's beliefs will help protect the local church from legal liability based upon claims of discrimination against legally protected classes.

The policy also highlights the doctrinal relationship between a local church's beliefs and standards and those of the denomination as a whole. If challenged, this policy will enhance the denomination's ability to support the local church.

By taking these three actions, your church will have the documentation in place to respond well to the legal challenges resulting from the cultural trend to redefine marriage, gender, and the family.

The church's sincerely held religious beliefs must not only be *documented* but *practiced* as well. The next section addresses the application of our Alliance beliefs to specific church practices.

## **B. Your beliefs must be expressed in the life of your church.**

This section provides guidance for the way an Alliance church can apply our deeply held religious beliefs to specific church practices and activities. There are three important preliminary points.

- First, our beliefs *must* be expressed in our actions; otherwise, no court or government official will believe that our beliefs are credible. In other words,

we will lose our constitutionally granted protection to practice what we believe.

- Second, it's important to remember that our response to a practicing gay or lesbian should be the same as our response to anyone who is in unrepentant sin: with love, grace, and truth. This is equally applicable to those who are engaged in any sexual activity outside of a biblical marriage.
- And third, the guidelines below relate to people who embrace a gay or lesbian lifestyle, not to people with a same-sex orientation. We are aware that there are Christians in our churches who have same-sex attractions but are responding to Scripture in godly submission, resisting the temptation. We serve our churches by teaching from the full breadth of biblical texts that highlight the significance of celibacy and self-discipline and the important role of the church family in the lives of those who are single and those who are married.

As a church we must be able to respond with “grace and truth” to questions about why we believe what we believe about gay and lesbian behavior. Attachment D in this document, **Answering LGBT Affirmations**, may be helpful as a membership discussion tool. Attachment E is a brief list of **recommended books** on these topics.<sup>4</sup>

The following are guidelines for your church leadership to consider as you prepare to address these issues:

1. *Should our church welcome practicing gays and lesbians to attend?*

The short answer is yes, absolutely. The church is a place where broken people (including each of us) can encounter the gospel of Jesus Christ. We welcome and love all people, because all people are in need of the Savior. In order to believe that he or she is created in the image of God, each person must be treated as an image bearer.

It is wise to discern, whenever possible, between those who are sincere seekers and those who may be agenda-driven activists. The church is private property, so if someone is disruptive, that person may be removed and asked not to return unless he or she is willing to participate appropriately.

2. *Should our church welcome a practicing gay or lesbian into church membership?*<sup>5</sup>

No. An Alliance church cannot welcome a practicing gay or lesbian into membership. In The Alliance we believe that it is inappropriate to add as a member anyone who is in any form of unrepentant sin. Unrepentant sin is

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<sup>4</sup> A more comprehensive bibliography of works related to a biblical view of homosexuality is **available here (see Attachment F)**.

<sup>5</sup> Although not an immediate need, in the long term an emphasis on church membership will strengthen a church's response to outside cultural and legal challenges. Church membership provides a church the opportunity (1) to teach its core beliefs and practices in membership classes, (2) to identify those who formally identify with the church, for church family issues such as voting and the exercise of church discipline, and (3) to create mutual accountability. See **The Value of Formal Church Membership** by Peacemaker Ministries.

inconsistent with the membership qualifications outlined in the Uniform Constitution for Accredited Churches, Article III. However, the church should welcome the request for membership as an opportunity to engage the person in “truth and grace.”

3. *Should our church allow or participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies?*

No. In The Alliance we believe that marriage is between one man and one woman, and that Scripture specifically forbids same-sex unions (Statement on Marriage—Divorce—Remarriage, 2.b and e). Adopting the Faith Community and Mission Policy provides a legal safeguard in anticipation of a request to use your church facilities for a same-sex wedding ceremony or reception.<sup>6</sup>

4. *Should our church allow a practicing gay or lesbian to participate in communion or baptism?*

In The Alliance we believe that the ordinances of communion and baptism are not open to anyone who persists in unrepentant sin. If you see someone participating in communion whom you know embraces a gay or lesbian lifestyle, or if such a person requests baptism, take the opportunity to engage them about the role and privilege of communion and baptism in the Body of Christ.

5. *Should we dedicate the child of a same-sex couple?*

Probably not, but this answer requires a little more explanation. In our Alliance tradition, part of a child dedication ceremony consists of the pastor requesting and the parent(s) responding with a series of commitments to raise the child according to the Christian faith. *The Pastor’s Handbook* states:

*Minister: (Speaking to the parents)... (D)o you solemnly confess that it is your purpose to dedicate this child to the Lord and to His service? Will you pray with him and for him; instruct him faithfully in the doctrines of the Christian faith; teach him to read the Word of God, to pray and to lead a holy life; take him faithfully to the house of worship to attend its services; and do all that is in your power to bring him to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?<sup>7</sup>*

Parents of a child who are involved in any form of unrepentant sin would not be able to credibly affirm such a statement.

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<sup>6</sup> Although not an immediate need, your church should consider implementation of a separate wedding policy to strengthen your ability to communicate to prospective wedding couples what we in The Alliance believe about marriage. The Christian Legal Society has created a sample wedding policy on page 16 of its paper **Church Guidance for Same-Sex Issues**.

<sup>7</sup> *The Pastor’s Handbook*, Christian Publications, Inc., out of print. 167–168.

6. *Should our church leaders provide counseling services to a practicing gay or lesbian?*

Absolutely! Pastor, author, and Christian counselor Tim Lane (president of the Institute for Pastoral Care) put it this way: “Biblical counseling involves walking patiently with someone, while wisely connecting them to Christ through the grace-centered message of the Bible. This one-on-one ministry is done in the community of the church, where both the normal and complex problems of daily life can be addressed.” Making biblical counsel available is a wonderful way to offer both discipleship and evangelism to attendees facing all sorts of issues.

7. *Should our church employ practicing gays or lesbians or accept them as volunteers?*

It depends. The key question is: *What does the position require the person to know and believe?* Any position in which that person formally represents the church must require a faithful commitment to our Alliance theological beliefs and doctrines. At the very least, the list of such positions would include pastors, church officers, and teachers, whether paid or volunteer. The following are additional positions that each church needs to evaluate under this standard:

- Youth workers/volunteers: Every church should already have in place a robust youth worker recruiting and screening process that requires all who work with youth to be either church members or adherents who are in harmony with C&MA beliefs and doctrines. **Safe Place** is an excellent Alliance resource for our churches. All youth worker positions—nursery to high school, volunteer or paid—should have an appropriate level of screening and oversight.
- Platform/music ministry: The nature of leading worship is to worship. Therefore, leading worship through music is a worship issue, not a performance issue. In the Alliance, we require in our worship leaders a faithful commitment to our Alliance theological beliefs and doctrines.
- Service roles (custodial, kitchen, homeless ministries, and other humanitarian/relief ministries): For these roles, the decision depends on whether the position requires the person to represent the church. In many cases the position may not require a commitment to Alliance theological beliefs and doctrines. In some of our churches, these types of positions offer an entry into church life and Christianity for those who are seeking to learn more about the Christian faith.
- Off-site church activities: What about accommodations at church camps and retreats? For instance, what if a legally married same-sex couple desires to share a room? It is consistent with Alliance beliefs and doctrines to require them to sleep separately. What if a legally married same-sex couple registers for a church marriage retreat? In relation to church activities, the courts do not yet require the church to recognize

and accommodate same-sex marriage couples for this purpose. This is an instance in which it will be critical for the church to have in place clearly stated Articles and Bylaws, the affirmation of related Statements, and adoption of the **Faith Community and Mission Policy**.

In any of the above areas, our churches must be clearly and demonstrably driven by our love for all people as image bearers of our Creator. The second greatest commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and 1 Corinthians 13 show us God's design for our relationships with those who don't share our traditional biblical view of marriage. Humble orthodoxy is our guide.

8. *Uncharted areas.*

As a result of the same-sex marriage ruling, evangelical churches like The Alliance that hold to a biblically traditional view of marriage will face new questions. For example, what if a married lesbian couple, who have been together for 20 years and are raising children, come to a traditional view of marriage through the ministry of your church? Should you require them to divorce? What about the children? Who will get custody? What if the couple commits to celibacy but desires to remain in the same household?

These types of questions are not easy and will require rigorous and thoughtful input from our best biblical thinkers. The legal team at the National Office will continue to track the legal aspects of these developing issues and work with our national leaders to provide our churches with timely counsel and direction.

## RELATED ALLIANCE ENTITIES

As a result of the *Obergefell* decision, our related Alliance entities, including our schools, retirement centers, and camps, will face additional pressures because they do not always share the level of religious liberty protection experienced by a local church. The threat to these Alliance organizations is greater and more imminent. In the case of our schools, there will be pressure that our government may withdraw grants, student scholarships, and other benefits unless schools fully accommodate same-sex marriage and other sexual and gender practices that are inconsistent with Alliance doctrine. The same is true for our retirement centers, which may be required to allow same-sex living arrangements or face the loss of their tax-exempt status and Medicare reimbursement. Likewise, our camps will experience similar pressures or risk losing their tax-exempt status and face substantial fines.

Because the circumstances of each related Alliance entity is unique, we cannot provide in this document a detailed response for each type of organization. However, every entity will need to carefully consider the following issues.

First and foremost, the relationship between the entity and The Alliance must be strengthened and clarified. The essential elements in the section, **Action Items for the Local Church**, apply with equal importance to our related Alliance entities. These actions will strengthen their legal position because there will be a solid, rather than dotted, line connecting them with The Alliance.

Second, the role of our related entities *as an essential part of our Alliance church function* must be continually reinforced. In other words, it's not just a good idea to have colleges, retirement communities, and camps; these entities are actually core and essential expressions of our worship and mission. The entities' policies, training, documents, and actions must all be aligned with this truth.

Third, our related Alliance entities must provide clear public notice of our Alliance practices and beliefs to prospective guests/customers/students. We want to avoid any indignity of someone being invited in and then excluded in some way. Again, the idea of humble orthodoxy is paramount.

The application of the above steps will be worked out differently in each Alliance organization, but the core principles remain the same.

#### A FINAL WORD

The legal and cultural issues faced by our churches are changing and developing rapidly. The National Office is committed to providing helpful and timely counsel as we continue to fulfill the mission Christ ordained for us. Please **contact your district office** with questions and concerns. The General Counsel's office will continue to work with Church Ministries and the district superintendents to address these concerns.

# ATTACHMENT A

## STATEMENT ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

Section H7 from the  
*Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, 2015 Edition*

The basis for this official statement of The Christian and Missionary Alliance is found in Article I of its Statement of Faith:

“The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men. They constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice.”

Christian understanding of human identity is grounded in the Word of God. The significance of human sexuality is particularly evident in the account of creation. Human beings, fashioned by God in His own image, are created male and female (Genesis 1:27). This complementary nature of human sexuality is affirmed again in the second chapter of Genesis. Woman is fashioned out of man (Genesis 2:18–24). Thus, from the beginning human sexual identity is reciprocal. That is, one’s own human nature is properly understood in complementary relationship to another who is alike in nature, but opposite sexually. Like the rest of God’s creation, the sexual differences between man and woman are pronounced “very good” (Genesis 1:31). We therefore affirm human sexuality to be a gift of God. By God’s grace, human sexuality both enriches and fulfills our personhood.

Sexuality is an essential attribute of human nature. It is an obviously significant influence in human life, but our Creator did not intend it to be the defining characteristic of humanness. As a result of humankind’s fall from innocence (Genesis 3), the complementary nature of human sexuality, like all other human relationships has been distorted. Adam and Eve’s disobedience did not only lead to death and separation from God, it also alienated human beings from one another. This alienation distorts sexual relationships between men and women. Holy Scripture indicates that human beings are created in the image of God. The essential characteristics of humanness are therefore found in those attributes endowed by God at creation and given by God’s grace as a result of knowing Christ. Paul, the apostle, urged followers of Christ to understand that “there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The apostle’s words are intended to place human sexuality in a redemptive context. It is of secondary importance to an individual’s relationship to God. That relationship is equally accessible to both sexes through one’s faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This understanding of human sexuality is reflected in the teaching of Jesus Himself. Our Lord Jesus addressed matters of human sexuality and marriage on several occasions. Jesus clearly taught that love rather than sex is the primary bond in all Christian relationships. Jesus said the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love one’s neighbor (Mark 12:28–30).

Sexual practices that have been divorced from loving, covenantal relationships between men and women pervert God’s intentions and result in sinful, exploitive, and promiscuous behavior that ruptures relationships between men and women, and erodes the relationship between

human beings and their Creator. Humanity's failure to ground sexual identity in God's creative intent and holy character violates Biblical standards of sexual purity.

In Matthew 15:19, Jesus teaches that immoral behavior starts first in the heart and mind. Self-indulgent thoughts of sexual fulfillment outside of God's creative intent constitute inward sins of lust. No sexual act can be proper if it is driven by desires that are contrary to the best interest of another human being or if it treats persons as impersonal objects intended only for personal gratification. Passion aroused by producing or viewing images of a sexual nature is morally unacceptable. We reject the idea that pedophilia, voyeurism, prostitution, or pornography is ever morally justified. We reject all attempts at constructing one's own sexual identity by medically altering the human body, cross dressing, or similarly practicing behaviors characteristic of the opposite sex as morally objectionable and sinful (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Holy Scripture bears witness to God's will regarding human sexuality. Sexual desire is rightfully fulfilled only within the lifelong union of a man and a woman in (holy) matrimony. Unmarried singles who abstain from sex can be whole, mature persons, as pleasing to God as persons who are faithful in marriage. Sexual celibacy is a worthy state for mature men and women (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:1, 8).

Heterosexual marriage is rooted in the order of creation. It is not just a matter of tradition. Marriage is intended to be an enduring covenantal relationship which reflects Christ's own unconditional commitment to the Church (Ephesians 5:25–27). God established marriage as a union of one man and one woman within which it is good, right, and proper to engage in sexual relations. Matrimonial customs may differ from one culture to another but the fundamental divine intent for marriage may not be changed on the basis of mere preference, custom, or culture. The dictates of culture, tradition, or personal preference must be brought into submission to the Word of God. Marriage cannot be redefined at the caprice of public opinion and must not be allowed to shift with the changing tide of cultural mores or social practice.

All sexual relationships outside of marriage are condemned by Holy Scripture. They are therefore never appropriate. This includes all forms of intimate sexual stimulation that excite passion and sexual activity between unmarried individuals (Matthew 5:27–29; Galatians 5:19). Such behavior offends God and often causes physical and emotional pain as well as loss in this life. God's blessing rests on sexual intimacy only when it occurs within the boundaries of marriage. Thus, we do not believe that the church should welcome into its membership any person who willfully refuses to turn away from the sin of living in a sexual relationship outside of marriage (1 Corinthians 5:1–13).

In the New Testament, Jesus confirms the heterosexual creation of human beings: *God made them male and female* (Matthew 19:4). Throughout Scripture heterosexual families consisting of a father, mother, and their children (unless they are unable to bear children) are the norm of society. The New Testament reinforces the teaching of heterosexual love and sexual relations within marriage (Ephesians 5:22–33; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:1–5).

Alongside this clear biblical teaching on God's design for heterosexual marriage are found specific instructions that prohibit homosexual conduct, for example: *Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable* (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13). Homosexual conduct is

declared to be detestable because it is out of harmony with the purpose for which God created human beings.

The New Testament states: *They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion* (Romans 1:25–27). Worshipping the creation more than the Creator not only alienated human beings from God but also distorted their heterosexual identity as created by God. Homosexual conduct gives evidence of the universal human rejection of God’s supreme glory and, like all forms of sexual behavior that violate God’s original design, it is sin.

The New Testament further states: *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God* (1 Corinthians 6:9–10).

The same passage of Scripture strongly affirms the liberating power of the Christian gospel. Sinful men and women may be freed from all former sinful patterns of life, including sexual sin, whether heterosexual or homosexual: *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Like all other sins, the corruption of sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ’s atoning work even though physical and psychological scars caused by sexual sin cannot always be erased in this life. We grieve with those who suffer hardships caused by sexual immorality, even if it is caused by their sinful acts. We strive to give aid in ways that do not deny personal responsibility for sexual behavior. We believe Christ set an example of loving ministry to those who suffer from the results of their own acts of sin in the example of the woman caught in adultery, “...Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:3–11).

# ATTACHMENT B

## STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE— DIVORCE—REMARRIAGE

Section H2 from the  
*Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 2015 Edition

### PREAMBLE

That the purpose of this statement be clear is imperative to its proper consideration. As an “instructional statement of The Christian and Missionary Alliance,” it is intended as an expositional guideline of common understanding to which the 1977 General Council (Calgary, Alberta, Canada) could subscribe as a basis on which to agree or disagree with grace and forbearance.

For some, the interpretation may be too broad and for others, too confining. But a common standard is needed in order to deal adequately with the issues of divorce and remarriage. The position set forth here neither promotes divorce nor weakens the scriptural stance represented in former legislation. The Commission on Divorce Study endeavored neither to take from nor to add to scriptural teaching on divorce.

### INSTRUCTIONAL STATEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE\*

#### 1. Introduction.

- a. More and more marriages are failing; divorces and remarriages are becoming increasingly common. If couples who live together without the benefit of a registered marriage contract and then separate are counted, half the marriages that take place today in North America fail.
- b. Yet marriage is an essential, sacred institution, a cornerstone of society. It was established by God Himself when the Lord said, *...It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him* (Genesis 2:18), and marriage has enjoyed divine sanction and blessing across the centuries. Ephesians 5 reveals the sacredness of marriage when the union between Christ and the Church is used to illustrate the husband-wife relationship.
- c. Therefore, the Church today must do everything in its power to encourage and maintain the institution of marriage and on God-given grounds. Some today would set standards for conduct in this area other than by the authority of the Word of God. Among even those who seek to hold to biblical authority are divergent opinions, particularly with respect to the right of divorced persons to

remarry. It seems imperative, therefore, that The Christian and Missionary Alliance set forth what we understand to be the scriptural teaching on these subjects.

- d. This statement is designed not to answer all questions and cover all situations but to provide guidelines from which can be drawn scriptural applications to varying situations. This has been written with the social conditions of North America in view. Consequently, some adaption may be necessary in countries overseas because of special social situations.

## 2. Marriage.

- a. God instituted marriage as an honorable estate (Hebrews 13:4) for the blessing of companionship (Genesis 2:18) and as a continuation of the divine work of creation in the history of the human race (Genesis 4:1). Marriage is not a requirement for perfection of personhood nor is it a necessity for fulfillment in God's highest purpose. Marriage may, in fact, hamper a person's unconditional readiness for the call of God, and there are those who have the gift of refraining from marriage (Matthew 19:12, 1 Corinthians 7:7).
- b. God intended marriage to be a monogamous, lifelong union as clearly implied in Genesis 2:24, *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* Jesus recalled this original order of creation to overthrow the lax interpretation and practice of the Mosaic law (Mark 10:6ff). Although polygamy was sometimes practiced in Old Testament times, the Bible makes clear that God intended marriage to exist between one man and one woman for as long as both of them remain alive. In Romans 7:2 the apostle Paul wrote, *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband* (also 1 Corinthians 7:39).
- c. The strict and lofty terms with which the marriage bond is described in the New Testament has its primary focus on human fellowship and the family. For the Christian the basis of all marital love is the love of Christ for the Church (Ephesians 5:31ff). Marriage is constituted first in mutual covenant. Marriage is a solemn, binding agreement entered into before God and man (Malachi 2:14). Ezekiel 16:8 uses marriage to illustrate the relationship between God and Israel and speaks of this relationship as a covenant entered into on the basis of swearing or an oath or a pledge. Jesus, in John 2, sanctioned by His presence a marriage being recognized and solemnized by a public celebration. Therefore, men and women should enter marriage with a legal contract and pledged vows, preferably under the administration of a Christian minister, not just by deciding to start to live together.
- d. Marriage is a physical union. This is clearly set forth by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:16ff. Marriage is designed to be a unity of flesh and spirit and represents the wholeness of that unity (1 Thessalonians 4:3–5). In 2 Corinthians 12:19–21 the apostle Paul warns the Corinthian church that impenitence of those who committed sexual immorality would necessitate his intervention.

- e. In no case ought any person to enter into any so-called “marriage” with a person of the same sex. Homosexual unions are specifically forbidden in Scripture and are described as manifestations of the basest forms of sinful conduct which degrade human dignity and desecrate God’s creational design (Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26–27, 32, 1 Corinthians 6:9).
- f. A Christian should not marry a person who does not know Christ as personal Savior. 2 Corinthians 6:14 is explicit, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers....* The final few words of 1 Corinthians 7:39 suggest the same standard; widows who remarry are told to do so *only in the Lord*. Love for Christ is never to have second place (Matthew 6:33).

### 3. Divorce.

- a. Divorce is a departure from the purposes of God. While in the Old Testament divorce was allowed and was apparently easily secured. This, like polygamy, was contrary to God’s highest intentions. Jesus explained that provisions for divorce in the Old Testament were an accommodation to “the hardness” of people’s hearts and a necessary evil (Matthew 19:8). The prophet Malachi declared, *For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel...* (Malachi 2:16, RSV). Jesus said, *What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder* (Matthew 19:6, also Mark 10:6–9). The Church, therefore, should seek always to discourage divorce as a solution to marital problems. The Bible teaches that even when a Christian is married to a nonbeliever, the Christian should continue to live with his/her mate if at all possible (1 Corinthians 7:12–13).
- b. While divorce is always contrary to God’s intentions, there are certain circumstances when it is permitted. Jesus said in Matthew 5:32 and again in Matthew 19:9 that a person is not to divorce his/her mate except for the cause of fornication. The Greek word used for “fornication” refers to habitual sexual immorality for which the synonym “whoredom” may be used, implying all kinds of immorality, including adultery which desecrates the marriage relationship—a view generally accepted by Greek scholars.
- c. The absence of this allowance in Mark 10:6–12 and Luke 16:18 does not set aside the practical conditions for carrying out the Mosaic practice of divorce in the new age Christ establishes. But He makes a sharper interpretation which handles the problem of divorce as a lesser evil to the continuation of an impossible situation. Divorce is expressly denied for the immediate purpose of marrying someone else (Mark 10:11–12). It is incumbent, therefore, that a believer entertain divorce only as a last resort and because of violations through fornication—never as a reason to marry someone else. When one partner of a divorce has become involved in adultery, the offended mate is permitted, though not required, to get a divorce. If an unsaved husband/wife refuses to continue to live with his/her mate and departs, the believer may agree to this

separation. *But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases...* (1 Corinthians 7:15). Such separations may result in divorce, and in that event the Christian is guilty of no wrong.

#### 4. Remarriage.

- a. The remarriage of persons who have been divorced is permitted by Scripture under certain circumstances. If, after being divorced, one of the original marriage partners dies, the remaining partner is free to remarry. Romans 7:2 and 1 Corinthians 7:39 make clear that death dissolves the marriage relationship.
- b. When an adulterous relationship has brought about a divorce, the party that is innocent of adultery has a right to remarry. The words of Jesus, *...Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication*, implies the right of remarriage. When He adds, *...And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced* (the guilty party) *committeth adultery* (Matthew 5:32), the right to marry anyone guilty of adultery is denied and also to marry anyone who obtained divorce for the express purpose of remarriage (Mark 10:11–12).
- c. The consistency between the Old Testament and the New Testament is recognized as Jesus interpreted it. The passage in Deuteronomy from which Jesus quoted in Matthew 5:31 and Mark 10:2–12 indicates that the “putting away” of a wife dissolves the marriage and allows remarriage. Jesus did not change the nature of divorce as dissolving marriage and permitting remarriage; He simply rejected all rationalization and excuse for divorce and made clear that only the innocent party whose former marriage was revoked by divorce could remarry without guilt.
- d. According to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 7, which permits divorce when an unbelieving husband/wife of a believer “departs” (Section 3c), remarriage on grounds of desertion alone is not permitted according to verse 11, *But, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.* In other words, if the unbelieving, deserting party is not deceased and does not remarry, neither should the one who has been deserted remarry.
- e. When two unbelievers have been divorced and one is subsequently converted and neither has remarried, the Christian should attempt to restore the marriage. If the non-Christian refuses, this makes the marriage the same as the kind described in 1 Corinthians 7:15.
- f. If a person is divorced on other than the above scriptural grounds and his/her former partner remarries, that partner by remarrying has, according to scriptural standards (Matthew 5:32, 19:9), committed adultery and has dissolved the original relationship.

- g. Remarriage is never commanded; it is in some cases only permitted. Divorced persons who have scriptural grounds for remarriage should enter into such remarriage only with the greatest caution. Seldom is there a marriage failure for any cause in which one of the partners is “completely innocent.” The applicant for remarriage should demonstrate an attitude of repentance for any part he/she may have had in the original failure. He/she should receive counseling from the church so as to avoid repeating destructive attitudes and actions.
- h. Persons who remarry after being divorced on other than scriptural grounds are guilty before God of adultery. Jesus said in Matthew 5:32, *...Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.* Such marriages should not be performed by a Christian clergyman.
- i. Persons who have been divorced on other than scriptural grounds who subsequently become Christians are not absolved from the necessity to remain unmarried by having become Christians. While it is true that we are made new creatures in Christ, we continue to bear legal and moral responsibilities that existed before conversion. A person, for example, that contracted a debt as a non-Christian is not absolved of an obligation to pay that debt by becoming a believer. A man who brought children into this world as a non-Christian must still provide for those children after his conversion. A man who contracted a marriage while a non-Christian must honor the terms of that marriage contract even after he is in Christ.
- j. Persons who were divorced and remarried without scriptural grounds prior to conversion should not feel obligated after conversion to withdraw from the subsequent marriage. The remarriage that was entered into wrongly constituted an act of adultery that broke the former marriage.

With his/her former marriage having been dissolved, the remarried person is responsible to be faithful to his/her new contract. Having broken the former marriage, he/she is “living in adultery only” if he/she is unfaithful to his/her present marriage contract.

- k. Persons who are divorced or divorced and remarried on scriptural grounds are entitled to the full privileges of fellowship and membership in the church. A believer who was divorced or divorced and remarried on other than scriptural grounds while still a nonbeliever should likewise be received into full Christian fellowship. The grace of God in Christ forgives all sin; the person in Christ is a new creation.
- l. Discretion, however, must be exercised in the choice of divorced and remarried persons for places of leadership in the church. While all believers are equal members of the body of Christ, not all members are qualified equally for every office in the church. The offices of elder (spiritual leader) and deacon (business leader) in the church are to be filled by those of high moral and spiritual qualifications, whose pattern of exemplary Christian living is so established that it may be followed.

- m. A believer who knowingly secures a divorce on other than scriptural grounds, or a believer who knowingly marries someone who was divorced on other than scriptural grounds, or a believer whose divorce was granted on other than scriptural grounds and who remarries should be disciplined by the church and be granted the full privileges of Christian fellowship only after a demonstration of genuine repentance for deliberate departure from scriptural standards.

*\*Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations throughout this section are from the King James Version of the Bible.*

# ATTACHMENT C

## REGARDING THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE AND ITS ECCLESIASTICAL ENTITIES

from the *Church Ministries Handbook*, 2015 Edition

The following form is suggested for adoption by districts, local churches, and other entities within the C&MA. It has been prepared as a model policy to describe how an entity's activities and operational policies—including the use of facilities and the provision of health insurance—reflect the C&MA's sincerely held religious beliefs. Each adopting entity should replace the term "Entity" with a term specific to such entity (such as "Church").

The purpose of this model policy is to provide protection for C&MA churches, districts, and other C&MA entities in face of our country's quickly changing cultural and moral standards. The government and courts have continued to redefine gender, family and marriage, while also increasing access to abortion and euthanasia.

The policy is also designed to express the doctrinal relationship between the church's beliefs and standards and those of the denomination as a whole. If challenged, this policy will enhance the denomination's ability to support the local church.

### **Use of church facilities.**

Recent legal developments have held that many types of facilities must not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, same sex marriage, gender identity and other protected classes. This policy articulates the C&MA's sincerely held long-standing beliefs and standards related to family, marriage and gender roles, and provides guidelines to ensure that the use of church facilities is consistent with the expression of these beliefs. Connecting facility use guidelines to the C&MA's beliefs will help protect the local church from legal liability based upon claims of discrimination against legally protected classes.

### **Provision of health care plans.**

Evangelical Christian churches face increasing pressure to provide health insurance that covers procedures that violate our belief in the sanctity of life. These procedures may include abortion, abortion-inducing drugs and euthanasia. By stating that the church (or other entity) will not, for religious reasons, provide a health care benefit plan that funds these procedures and drugs, the policy protects the church against government requirements to help facilitate acts that violate our biblical beliefs.

- This policy only relates to plans provided by a church (or other entity). The policy does not prohibit participation by church employees in other insurance plans.

- The C&MA health insurance plans are consistent with this policy since they do not provide these procedures or drugs.
- Other than the C&MA plan and some other denominational group plans, very few health insurance plans will be consistent with this policy.

If a church is willing to provide a health plan that covers abortions or abortion-inducing drugs, then the church should delete the second paragraph under the heading ***Sanctity of Life***, in Section B.

**Modifications.**

Any other modifications should be made only after consulting with the Church Ministries office and the C&MA General Counsel.

SAMPLE FORM  
REGARDING THE FAITH COMMUNITY AND  
MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE  
AND ITS ECCLESIASTICAL ENTITIES

**I. Key Characteristics of the C&MA's Faith Community and Mission.**

The \_\_\_\_\_ of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (“[Entity]”) is a community of faith that exists to exercise and express its biblical beliefs both in and through the broader faith community of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA). These beliefs are grounded in an understanding of Holy Scripture including those beliefs and standards specifically addressed in the *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (Manual)*.

A. The C&MA's Biblical Beliefs.

The [Entity] is a community of faith, based on its and the C&MA's biblical beliefs, which include the following.

1. *Statement of Faith.* The C&MA has adopted the statement of faith set forth in the *Manual*.
2. *Christian Mission and Values.* The [Entity] directs all of its activities in accordance with the following C&MA mission:

We desire to know Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King and to complete His Great Commission. The Alliance will fulfill His Commission through

Evangelizing and discipling persons throughout the United States,  
Incorporating them into Christ-centered, community-focused congregations,  
and  
Mobilizing them for active involvement in a global effort designed to plant Great Commission churches among unengaged, unreached and responsive peoples worldwide.

In carrying out this mission, the [Entity] activities are conducted in accordance with the following biblical values:

Lost people matter to God. He wants them found. Luke 19:10  
Prayer is the primary work of the people of God. Philippians 4:6–7  
Everything we have belongs to God. We are His stewards. 1 Chronicles 29:14  
Knowing and obeying God's Word is fundamental to all true success.  
Joshua 1:8

Completing the Great Commission will require the mobilization of every fully devoted disciple. Matthew 28:19

Without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can accomplish nothing.  
1 Corinthians 2:4–5

Achieving God’s purposes means taking faith-filled risks. This always involves change. Hebrews 11:6

B. Representatives and Other Participants

This [Entity]’s faith community is represented by all of the [Entity]’s officers, directors, employees, licensed workers and volunteer leaders, each of whom serves the [Entity]’s mission and is an integral part of the community (each such person is described for purposes of this Statement only as an “[Entity] representative”). The other community participants, including [Entity] members and volunteers, contribute to the [Entity]’s faith community, but they do not represent the [Entity] unless they are also employees or leaders or have been designated as such by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority.

C. Christian Exercise and Expression.

1. *As a Community.* The C&MA believes that the church is the visible organized expression of the Body of Christ and that the church finds broader meaning and outreach in fulfilling its biblical responsibilities within the life and witness of the denomination. In addition, those who participate in the life of the C&MA, including the [Entity] representatives, are following the biblical command to live out their faith in community and association with other believers. Accordingly, the [Entity] is itself an exercise and expression of its biblical beliefs and standards.
2. *Through its Mission Based Activities.* The C&MA believes that all [Entity] activities, including the responsibilities of every [Entity] member and employee, should be rendered in service to God as a form of worship. Therefore, the [Entity] as a community of faith exercises and expresses its biblical beliefs in every activity, action, and responsibility.

**II. Christian Community Standards for Ministry Activities.**

A. General Standards.

The [Entity] shall engage in activities and use its facilities solely to exercise and express the biblical beliefs of the [Entity] and the C&MA and to further the mission of both. In furtherance of this mission, the [Entity] may provide services or goods to, and may allow use of its facilities by, other groups and persons who are not members or employees of the [Entity]. But no [Entity] activity, nor any use of [Entity] facilities by another group or person, may be conducted or permitted if the [Entity] determines that such activity or use expresses a message of support by the [Entity] for any view contrary to the biblical beliefs of the [Entity] and the C&MA.

B. Specific Concerns.

For many years the C&MA as a faith community has had concerns with the cultural and legal trends in North America. This resulted in specific statements being adopted by the C&MA over the years to biblically address these cultural concerns. These cultural concerns include but are not limited to divorce, marriage, human sexuality, and sanctity of life. The [Entity] affirms the biblical beliefs and standards expressed in each statement.

*Marriage and Human Sexuality*

As such, the [Entity] subscribes to the biblical belief that God creates human beings in His image as two distinct genders, male and female, and that the intended gender identity of an individual is determined by such individual's biological sex at birth. The [Entity] applies this belief regarding gender identity in all policies and programs in the [Entity]'s faith community. In addition, the [Entity] subscribes to the biblical belief that God has instituted marriage as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman. The [Entity] recognizes only such marriages for all policies and programs in the [Entity]'s faith community. Further, the [Entity] subscribes to the biblical belief that sexual desire is rightfully fulfilled only within marriage and that unmarried singles who abstain from sex can be whole, mature persons, as pleasing to God as persons who are faithful in marriage.

*Sanctity of Life*

Likewise, the [Entity] subscribes to the biblical belief that all life is sacred from conception to death and that individuals are known by God from before the foundation of the world and that human life begins at conception and that death is under the sovereignty of God and not man. The [Entity] accordingly believes that no procedures should be performed for the primary objective of terminating a pregnancy and taking the life of an unborn child (such procedures are referred to herein as abortions) except in rarest of circumstances where other biblical, moral principles prevail, such as where it is medically impossible to save the life of both the mother and the child. Similarly, the [Entity] believes that no medical procedure should be performed that takes the life of an individual prematurely (such procedures are referred to as euthanasia). The [Entity]'s beliefs further prohibit paying for or otherwise facilitating such procedures.

As dictated by these beliefs, the [Entity] as an organization shall not fund abortions in any manner, including through a health care benefit plan that covers prescription drugs that induce abortions, except in the foregoing extraordinary circumstances unless in a particular situation (i) any such drug is prescribed and used solely for a non-abortive therapeutic treatment of a covered medical condition or for an abortion in the foregoing extraordinary circumstances, and (ii) coverage is approved by the plan's governing body or the [Entity]'s appropriate ecclesiastical authority. In addition, the [Entity] shall not participate through its health care benefit plan in a program that uses the plan as a means for providing drugs used to induce abortion, except in the foregoing extraordinary circumstances. Any requirement to facilitate abortions or euthanasia by participating in such a program, and any penalty for

failing to participate in such a program, would directly and substantially burden and undermine the [Entity]'s exercise and expression of its biblical beliefs.

### *Religious Activities*

In conformance with these biblical beliefs and standards, the [Entity] engages solely in activities that further its faith mission. All such activities can and should be vehicles for spiritual growth. Therefore, the [Entity] considers all of its activities to be a form of religious worship.

The [Entity] distinguishes between exclusive religious activities and integrated religious activities. Exclusive religious activities include devotional worship services such as chapel services conducted by the [Entity], and distinctly theological education or pastoral counseling.

Integrated religious activities include activities similar to those conducted by nonreligious organizations for the benefit of society. The [Entity] conducts such activities in furtherance of and in accordance with its biblical beliefs.

With respect to restrictions that may be imposed on the use of funds or other benefits offered to the [Entity], the [Entity] shall not agree to any restriction that would preclude the [Entity] from conducting its integrated religious activities in furtherance of and in accordance with its religious beliefs. [The [Entity] may agree not to use offered funds or benefits for exclusive religious activities.]

*The above bracketed sentence may be included by removing the brackets or deleted depending on the choice of the entity and its specific needs. Please note that the bracketed language in the next section will also need to be replaced with the specific leader's title. Please delete these italicized sentences when finalizing.*

### C. Implementation.

To the extent the [designated organization leader] determines it to be necessary or advisable to further the [Entity]'s mission or to cultivate the [Entity]'s faith community, he or she may establish additional standards based on Holy Scripture and the beliefs and standards addressed in the *Manual* for the activities and programs conducted within the faith community or for [Entity] representatives or other community participants. The determination as to whether any particular activity or use of [Entity] facilities is not permitted under this Policy requires spiritual discernment and an understanding of C&MA beliefs and standards which are applied to each particular circumstance. Such determination shall be made in conformance with this discernment and these beliefs and standards in the sole discretion of the spiritual leaders of the [Entity] designated by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority. With respect to uses by other groups or persons, the [Entity] may consider without limitation both the content of the proposed activities and whether the group or person is generally perceived by the public as advocating views contrary to the biblical beliefs of the [Entity] and the C&MA.

### III. Community Standards for [Entity] representatives.

#### A. Roles and Expectations.

In response to God's calling on their lives, [Entity] representatives exercise and express both their own and the C&MA's biblical beliefs and standards by working together to advance the [Entity]'s faith mission. [Entity] representatives are responsible for defining, cultivating, leading, and/or representing the [Entity]'s faith community as an expression and exercise of their and the C&MA's biblical beliefs and standards. Accordingly, each [Entity] representative shall be expected to (i) model these biblical beliefs and standards for others, (ii) perform all of their responsibilities as a service to God, and (iii) comply with the following obligations:

1. *Biblical Beliefs.* Each [Entity] representative shall affirm their agreement with the C&MA's statement of faith and other biblical beliefs and shall not subscribe to or promote any religious beliefs inconsistent with these beliefs.
2. *Christian Conduct Standards.* [Entity] representatives shall at all times (both during working and nonworking hours) endeavor to conduct themselves in a manner that affirms biblical standards of conduct in accordance with theirs and the C&MA's biblical beliefs.
3. *Distinctly Christian Activities.* Each [Entity] representative shall be ready, willing and able to lead or contribute to distinctly Christian activities such as worship or prayer services.

#### B. Noncompliance by Representatives.

If any [Entity] representative does not comply with the obligations set forth above, such representative shall have an obligation to disclose such noncompliance to the [Entity]. The [Entity] may determine whether such representative intends or is likely to continue in such noncompliance. If so, then the [Entity] may dismiss such representative from his or her position on the basis that such representative's noncompliance is inconsistent with and undermines the expression and exercise of the [Entity]'s faith community. Such action may be taken in accordance with any applicable procedures in the Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal.

#### C. Volunteers and Contract Workers.

Volunteers and contract workers are not considered to be representatives of the [Entity]'s faith community unless they are serving in leadership positions. Nevertheless, when volunteers and certain contract workers as determined by the [Entity], serve with the [Entity], they shall be required to acknowledge that they understand and agree to support the [Entity]'s mission and values. The [Entity] may give preference for such service to volunteers and contract workers who share its biblical beliefs.

## ATTACHMENT D

# ANSWERING LGBT AFFIRMATIONS<sup>1</sup>

**Affirmation 1:** *“I’m gay because God made me that way. So gay must be good. I cannot believe that God would create me with same-sex attraction and then deny me the right to sexual self-expression. I intend, therefore, to affirm, and indeed celebrate, what I am by creation.”*

**Response:** This statement makes the wrong assumption that because a person is born a certain way, that “way” must be good. Philosophers call this type of thinking naturalistic fallacy: *is = ought*, or *What is ought to be*. Adam and Eve were the only people created good (Gen. 1:26–31). After they fell into sin (Gen. 3), we have all been born into sin and much of life is not as it ought to be. Babies are born blind, without limbs, with heart problems and other issues. We never accept that because a baby is born that way it is as it should be. We try to repair the brokenness.

Some people appear to be born with a propensity to addictions, a propensity towards lust or violence, and everyone is born to be a self-worshipper. People naturally embrace a lie and rejects God’s truth (Rom. 1–2; Eph. 2:1–3; 4:17–18). Christian doctrine calls this condition **original sin**. We are born sinful (not simply committing sins), our very nature is **fallen**.

But God provides a cure to our broken state through redemption. People are to stop expressing themselves in whatever way they want (Matt. 5:27–30; 15:18–20). God calls people to follow him through repentance (Matt. 16:24–26). God regenerates/resurrects us with Christ (Eph. 2:4–10) and then calls us to put to death the remains of our sinful nature (Col. 3:1–5ff).

**Affirmation 2:** *“You may say that LBGT practice is against nature and normality; but it’s not against my nature, nor is it in the slightest degree abnormal for me. Paul speaks about “exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones” (Rom. 1:26) but I never exchanged anything. I’ve always been gay.”*

**Response:** This argument comes from a misunderstanding or misuse of Paul’s use of the terms “natural” and “unnatural.” Paul’s use of the term “natural” in Romans 1:26 refers to God’s original created nature for mankind, not to our fallen nature. So when Paul says that same-sex behavior is “contrary to nature” he means that it is “contrary to the way God created men and women in the beginning.”

Everyone is fallen and our fallen nature is abnormal and contrary to God’s created design. Our fallen nature means that we are flawed both physically and spiritually. Physically we struggle with certain genetic predispositions and a propensity to certain diseases. Spiritually we find it

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<sup>1</sup> I’m grateful for Dr. Rev. Alfred Poirier, Senior Pastor of Rocky Mountain Community Church and Adjunct Professor at Westminster Seminary, San Diego. These Responses were initially drafted by Dr. Poirier and have been adapted by permission for this purpose.

easy to lie, lust, love ourselves more than God, etc. But God says that our physical and spiritual flaws are not in accord with how he originally created mankind, but are the “unnatural” result of our fall from sin.

The only appropriate response to our fallen sinful condition is repentance (Ezek. 18:21-23; James 4:8–10). The Affirmation above instead seeks to embrace an aspect of our fallen sinful condition as good and right.

Further, when Paul writes that they “exchanged the truth about God for a lie,” (Rom. 1:25) he is talking about much more than same-sex behavior. He is referring to our shared, much deeper, condition as fallen creatures. At this level the exchange does not refer to a conscience and deliberate choice, but to our fallen state of being dead in sin and without hope except for the grace and mercy of God (Rom. 3:9–18; 5:1–2).

Everyone is born with an orientation to rebel against God, to hate his truth, to love the lie, and to worship created things rather than the Creator. A mere orientation does not mean that it is the way it ought to be (**see response to Affirmation 1**).

It is difficult for an LGBT Christian to accept the fact that his orientation and desires are compromised before God from the outset. But the deeper truth is that the orientation and desires of the entire human race are compromised from the outset. We are all fallen creatures in need of a Savior.

**Affirmation 3:** *“I’ve been in a committed, consensual, monogamous relation with another lesbian like myself and we care for one another, are raising two young children we adopted out of poverty and inevitable death (from Cambodia), go to church regularly, and contribute substantial time and effort in building homes for the poor. We are imperfect, but we love one another and others. Isn’t love of God and neighbor the greatest thing in the world, (Matt. 22:37–40)? How then can you stand there and condemn my love for my same-sex spouse?”*

**Response:** Love is commendable to the degree that it conforms to God’s definition of love. It is right to say that love is **a factor** for assessing the moral nature of a relationship, but it is not a **sufficient** factor. There is more to consider. True love is obeying and submitting to God (John 14:15; 1 Cor. 5:14-15). *If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!* (1 Cor. 16:22). Our Lord calls his people to love him even more than they love their parents and children (Matt. 10:37).

An unmarried heterosexual who has sexual relations with a girlfriend, or a polygamist, both could provide an extensive list of “loving deeds,” and still be in rebellion against God.

Christ calls his people to submit to him in all things. A rich man was able to recount a long list of good deeds to Jesus, but in the end went away grieved because he was unwilling to sell his extensive property as Jesus required (Mark 10:17–27).

Love is good, but love in place of submissive and obedient love of God in all things is still rebellion.

**Affirmation 4:** “So you say you are against gay marriage because of the Bible. Right? Even though Jesus never said anything about being gay. And don’t quote Leviticus to me because it also forbids you from eating bacon—which I know Christians love—and it forbids you from having pastors with bad eyesight. What hypocrites! You pick and choose what laws in the OT you’ll obey and what you won’t.”

**Response:** First, an argument from silence in this case is no argument at all. Jesus also never said anything about incest, domestic violence, rape, or bestiality. But no one claims that Jesus affirms these practices.

Second, the Affirmation implies that Jesus’ words are somehow weightier than other Scripture. But Christians believe that “The Old and New Testaments...were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will...”, and that all Scripture is “God breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). One part of Scripture is as much God’s truth as any other. Jesus did not need to directly address same-sex behavior because the consistent message in Scripture is that any sexual relations other than within marriage between one man and one woman is sin.

Third, Jesus clearly affirmed the sexual ethic expressed in Genesis 1–2: *(A)t the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ and said ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh...* (Matthew 19:4–5).

Fourth, this Affirmation implies that same-sex behavior in some manner may have been culturally acceptable in New Testament times. However, Old Testament Israel and the Judaism of Jesus’ day unequivocally condemned any sort of same-sex activity. Noted scholar and gay activist Louis Compton said this about the current attempt to rewrite Jewish cultural history:

“According to this interpretation, Paul’s words were not directed at “bona fide” homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstance. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any other Jew or early Christian.”<sup>2</sup>

Fifth, the Affirmation contains a common misrepresentation and/or misunderstanding about the nature of Old Testament Law. All Old Testament law is not the same. Biblical Scholars divide Old Testament Law into three distinct categories: ceremonial law, civil law, and moral law.<sup>3</sup>

Ceremonial and civil laws were provisional in nature and are no longer in force in the New Testament age. Ceremonial laws such as those related to circumcision, dietary restrictions, and temple sacrifices were all required because in one way or another they pointed to Christ and were fulfilled or completed in Christ. Civil laws were connected to the Theocracy of Israel and most scholars agree that these laws ceased to be applicable outside of that context.

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<sup>2</sup> Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality & Civilization*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 114.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Cor 7:19; see also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, I, Q.99. Art. 4; John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.20.14,15. Calvin speaks of “the ancient writers who taught this division...”; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 19.3,4; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, three volumes, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1992) vol.2, p.166-167. For a similar division see article seven (VII. Of the Old Testament) of the Anglican *Articles of Religion*, also called the 39 Articles.

Moral laws, chiefly represented by the Ten Commandments, are universal principles reinforced by Christ, repeated in the New Testament, and applicable to all people at all times. A common interpretation is that the moral law acts as a *curb* to establish boundaries of proper behavior, a *mirror* to reveal to us our own sin, and a *guide* to show what is right and wrong. Same-sex behavior fits in the category of moral law.

Thus, this Affirmation makes a false comparison between dietary restrictions (ceremonial law), and same-sex behavior (moral law).

## ATTACHMENT E

# RECOMMENDED BOOKS

***The Bible and Homosexual Practice.*** Robert A.J. Gagnon. Abingdon Press, 2001.

Comprehensive, nuanced and scholarly treatise of the orthodox Christian view. Remains the standard reference.

***Is God Anti-Gay?*** Sam Allberry, The Goodbook Company, 2013.

A readable, concise, yet theologically robust book written by a British evangelical pastor. This 90 page book contains an excellent chapter specifically addressed to the local church context.

***Love into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual and the Church,*** Peter Hubbard, Ambassador International, 2013.

A wonderful Gospel-centric work. Hubbard places the person and work of Christ in the center of every chapter and discussion. The book will resonate with our Alliance theology.

***Loving My (LGBT) Neighbor: Being Friends in Grace and Truth.*** Glenn Stanton. Moody Publishers, 2014.

Practical and trustworthy guidance from the Director of Global Family Formation Studies at Focus on the Family. Winsome and unflinching in biblical integrity, this book seems to deal well with the difficult issues.

***Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God. A Broken Mother's Search for Hope.*** Christopher Yuan. Waterbrook Press, 2011.

A personal story of redemption written by a son and his mother. Yuan, now an instructor in bible at Moody Bible Institute, recounts his journey from active participation in the gay lifestyle to his gradual conversion as a Christ follower.

***What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*** Kevin DeYoung. Crossway, 2015.

Written by a trusted pastor and theologian.

ATTACHMENT F

**A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY PERTINENT TO A  
BIBLICAL VIEW OF HOMOSEXUALITY**

By Rev. Dr. Alfred J. Poirier  
June 2015

Note: Books or articles listed below that are marked with an asterisk (\*) refer to views that attempt to find biblical support for homosexuality or deny the Bible's relevance to contemporary understandings about homosexuality.

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## ATTACHMENT G

# STATEMENT OF FAITH

A1–Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation of The C&MA,  
Section 3 from the *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 2015 Edition

3. The Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation were adopted by a written consent of members signed by all members entitled to vote with respect thereto.

FIRST: **Name.** The name of the corporation is The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

SECOND: **Duration.** The corporation shall have perpetual existence.

THIRD: **Statement of Faith.**

- (a) There is one God<sup>1</sup>, who is infinitely perfect<sup>2</sup>, existing eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>
- (b) Jesus Christ is true God and true man.<sup>4</sup> He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.<sup>5</sup> He died upon the cross, the Just for the unjust,<sup>6</sup> as a substitutionary sacrifice,<sup>7</sup> and all who believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.<sup>8</sup> He arose from the dead according to the Scriptures.<sup>9</sup> He is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high as our great High Priest.<sup>10</sup> He will come again to establish His Kingdom of righteousness and peace.<sup>11</sup>
- (c) The Holy Spirit is a divine person,<sup>12</sup> sent to indwell, guide, teach, empower the believer,<sup>13</sup> and convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.<sup>14</sup>
- (d) The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men. They constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:48

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 2:6–11

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:36–38

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 3:18

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 2:9

<sup>8</sup> Romans 5:9

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:23–24

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 8:1

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 26:64

<sup>12</sup> John 14:15–18

<sup>13</sup> John 16:13 and Acts 1:8

<sup>14</sup> John 16:7–11

<sup>15</sup> 2 Peter 1:20–21 and 2 Timothy 3:15–16

- (e) Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God:<sup>16</sup> he fell through disobedience, incurring thereby both physical and spiritual death. All men are born with a sinful nature,<sup>17</sup> are separated from the life of God, and can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> The portion of the impenitent and unbelieving is existence forever in conscious torment;<sup>19</sup> and that of the believer, in everlasting joy and bliss.<sup>20</sup>
- (f) Salvation has been provided through Jesus Christ for all men; and those who repent and believe in Him are born again of the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of eternal life, and become the children of God.<sup>21</sup>
- (g) It is the will of God that each believer should be filled with the Holy Spirit and be sanctified wholly,<sup>22</sup> being separated from sin and the world and fully dedicated to the will of God, thereby receiving power for holy living and effective service.<sup>23</sup> This is both a crisis and a progressive experience wrought in the life of the believer subsequent to conversion.<sup>24</sup>
- (h) Provision is made in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the healing of the mortal body.<sup>25</sup> Prayer for the sick and anointing with oil are taught in the Scriptures and are privileges for the Church in this present age.<sup>26</sup>
- (i) The Church consists of all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are redeemed through His blood, and are born again of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church,<sup>27</sup> which has been commissioned by Him to go into all the world as a witness, preaching the gospel to all nations.<sup>28</sup>
- The local church is a body of believers in Christ who are joined together for the worship of God, for edification through the Word of God, for prayer, fellowship, the proclamation of the gospel, and observance of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>29</sup>
- (j) There shall be a bodily resurrection of the just and of the unjust; for the former, a resurrection unto life,<sup>30</sup> for the latter, a resurrection unto judgment.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Genesis 1:27

<sup>17</sup> Romans 3:23

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20–23

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 21:8

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 21:1–4

<sup>21</sup> Titus 3:4–7

<sup>22</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23

<sup>23</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>24</sup> Romans 6:1–14

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 8:16–17

<sup>26</sup> James 5:13–16

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 1:22–23

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 28:19–20

<sup>29</sup> Acts 2:41–47

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20–23

<sup>31</sup> John 5:28–29

(k) The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is imminent<sup>32</sup> and will be personal, visible, and premillennial.<sup>33</sup> This is the believer's blessed hope and is a vital truth which is an incentive to holy living and faithful service.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hebrews 10:37

<sup>33</sup> Luke 21:27

<sup>34</sup> Titus 2:11-14)

ATTACHMENT H  
MODEL RESTATED  
ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

E14–Model Articles of Incorporation for Local C&MA Churches, Section 2.1  
from the *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 2015 Edition

**ARTICLE II**

**PURPOSES, ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY AND POWERS**

**Section 2.1. Purposes and Ecclesiastical Authority.** The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively as a member church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, a church denomination which operates legally as a Colorado nonprofit corporation (the “C&MA”). Accordingly, the Church shall operate under the sole ecclesiastical authority of, and be subject to the usages, doctrines and teachings of, the C&MA as set forth in The Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance; as such manual may be amended from time to time by the C&MA (the “Manual”). Without limiting the foregoing, the purposes of the corporation shall include promulgating such doctrines and teachings, preaching the Gospel to every creature, edifying the Christians through the education of God’s word, promoting spiritual fellowship among God’s people on the basis of the biblical faith, and promoting religious activities and to further other religious, educational, and charitable work to that end. In addition, this corporation shall be organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

# ATTACHMENT I

## MODEL BYLAWS

E15–Model Bylaws for Local C&MA Churches, Preamble  
from the *Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance*, 2015 Edition

### PREAMBLE

The New Testament teaches that the local church is the visible organized expression of the Body of Christ. The people of God are to live and serve in obedience to the Word of God and under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance operates on the presupposition that the congregation finds broader meaning and outreach in fulfilling its biblical responsibilities within the life and witness of the denomination.

This document constitutes the Bylaws for \_\_\_\_\_ Church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (the “Church”). These Bylaws shall govern the nonprofit corporation or association through which the Church operates legally. As used herein, the term “Church” shall refer to such legal entity.

The Church is an integral part of the district, national, and worldwide fellowship of The Christian and Missionary Alliance and is united in governance, fellowship, and service in order to promote unity of faith in the fullness of Jesus Christ as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King, and to facilitate the spread of the gospel at home and abroad under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is organized and shall be operated exclusively as a member church of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, a church denomination which operates legally as a Colorado nonprofit corporation (the “C&MA”). Accordingly, the Church shall operate under the sole ecclesiastical authority of, and be subject to the usages, doctrines and teachings of, the C&MA as set forth in The Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, as such manual may be amended from time to time by the C&MA (the “Manual”).

This Preamble and Part 1 (General Bylaws) shall apply at all times. Part 2 (Developing Church Bylaws) shall apply at any time in which the Church is not an Accredited Church. Part 3 (Accredited Church Bylaws) shall apply at any time in which the Church is an Accredited Church.