

// Theological Statements

Abortion

We believe that the Bible teaches that an individual human life begins at conception. (Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:39-44)

We believe that the abortion-on-demand decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, January 22, 1973 (i.e., "Roe V. Wade") constitutes a clear turning away from Biblical standards.

Therefore, we encourage the members of First Reformed Church in Orange City to uphold, promote, and facilitate Biblical truths regarding the unborn child. (Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 13:3-5; Ezekiel 33:7-9; Proverbs 24:11-12)

Same-Sex Relationships

Homosexual acts are viewed throughout Scripture as sinful (Leviticus 18:22; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:8-11) and as a perversion (Romans 1:18-32) of God's intention that sexual relationships be reserved for heterosexual marriage (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:31-32). Scripture speaks in such a way that these principles would apply even to so-called "monogamous" homosexual relationships (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27).

Therefore, since Scripture is clear on this subject, the response of the Church to homosexuality should be twofold. First, in the face of increasingly hostile attitudes in our society towards Biblical morality, it must take its stand unashamedly on the Word of God and hold forth the light of the Word which alone can illumine a dark world (Psalm 119:150; II Peter 1:19).

Second, the Church must reach out with heartfelt compassion to homosexuals with the good news of God's love for us sinners, of Christ's gracious work to effect our forgiveness through repentance and faith in Him, and of the Holy Spirit's power to change our lives. The Church must not magnify this sin out of proportion to other sins, but must minister humbly, always mindful of the mercy it has received (Romans 12:3, 15:7; I Corinthians 4:7).(9/21/93)

Women's Leadership

As a member of the Reformed Church in America, FRC will continue to recognize the role of women in leadership as exhibited through the eligibility of women for election to the Consistory. This recognition is not intended to promote either gender but rather to acknowledge and engage the talents and gifts of both men and women in the advancement of God's Kingdom. It is also not intended to imply that FRC will align itself with the RCA on all issues or that future biblically balanced education on this particular topic is to be avoided.

We further recognize that this issue has the potential for continued damage to the FRC body weakening our efforts to honor God and advance the Kingdom through service to others. In order for FRC to fulfill its mission, it is necessary to move beyond the divisiveness of this issue, accepting differing opinions in non-salvation matters.(2008/05/20)

The Office of Elder

The Necessity of Elders

It is not only fitting, but biblically mandated, that the local church be governed by a plurality of elders. Elders were found in the earliest New Testament churches (Acts 11:30; 15:22; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1) and the Apostle Paul appointed elders or instructed the appointment of elders in the local church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

The Honor of Eldership

Serving as an elder is a noble task (1 Tim. 3:1). Elders are worthy of honor and respect (Heb. 13:7, 17) and ought to be esteemed highly in love because of their work in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:12). The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). Moreover, it is appropriate that those in the church who sow spiritual seed reap a material harvest for their labors (1 Cor. 9:11; Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:18).

The Desire for Eldership

While it is true that the aspiration to eldership should not be from selfish ambition (Gal. 5:20), desire plays a legitimate part in being appointed an elder. Where there is a desire truly generated by the Spirit, to lead and love the people of God as an elder, this desire is not only acceptable, but commendable (1 Tim. 3:1). In fact, those who shepherd God's flock must do so not under compulsion, but because they are willing and eager to serve (1 Peter 5:2).

The Qualifications for Elders

The requirements for elders, for the most part, are no different than God's requirements for any Christian, except that God calls an elder to be a distinguished example of the Christ-likeness to which he (God) calls all Christians.

Elders must be of excellent virtue in relation to God. They must hold firmly to scriptural truths (1 Tim. 3:9; Titus 1:9), be upright and holy (Titus 1:8), able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9), above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2, 9; Titus 1:6), not a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6), and a lover of what is good (Titus 1:8).

Elders must be of excellent virtue in relation to themselves. They should not be quick-tempered (Titus 1:7), nor given to drunkenness (1 Tim. 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7), nor in love with money (1 Tim. 3:3). They must be disciplined (Titus 1:8), sober-minded (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7), and self-controlled (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).

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Elders must be of excellent virtue in relation to family. They must be faithful to their spouse, not a philanderer, nor a polygamist (1 Tim. 3:2; 12). They must manage their family well (1 Tim. 3:4, 12; Titus 1:6) and have obedient children (1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12; Tit. 1:6).

The Duties for Elders

Elders are to direct the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17; Titus 1:7). This will include decision making (Acts 15), prayer (Acts 6:4), and general oversight (Acts 20:28). They supervise the membership of the church and maintain watch over the conduct of church members (BCO 1.1.1. sec. 8).

Elders are to shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2; Jude 12). They must guard the church from error (Acts 20:28-31; BCO 1.1.1. sec. 8) and attend to the needs of the sheep (James 5:14; BCO 1.1.5. sec. 3). They are to guard the sacraments from being profaned (BCO 1.1.1. sec. 8) and exercise loving discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:1 Cor. 5; BCO 1.1.5. sec. 4).

Elders are to instruct the people of God (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9; Acts 6:2; Eph. 4:12-13). They build up the church in right doctrine and sound teaching and make certain what is preached is in accord with the Scriptures (BCO 1.1.1. sec. 8). (6/17/03)

The Office of Deacon

The Meaning of the Term Deacon

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word *diakonos*. This term usually has the meaning servant, and in particular, table server. The term is used twenty-nine times in the New Testaments in a variety of ways, but always in connection with serving, service, or servanthood.

Qualifications for Deacon

Deacons are to display the character of Christ, just as any believer in Jesus should do. Scripture does, however, go on to provide specific qualities that deacons should clearly manifest in their lives. The paramount concern when choosing a deacon is to choose someone who is “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). The rest of the qualities a deacon is to possess are enumerated in 1 Timothy 3:8-12. The passage follows:

⁸Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ¹¹In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. ¹²A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.”

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In the local church, deacons are to be members of spiritual commitment, exemplary life, compassionate spirit, and sound judgment who are honorable, genuine, authentic, temperate, and blameless in all areas of life. In addition, they must be content with a simple lifestyle, have deep convictions concerning the faith, and display excellent virtue in relation to their family (faithful to their spouse and able to manage their children).

Responsibilities of Deacons

The office of the deacon exists to serve the body. By so doing, deacons relieve elders of certain duties and pressures that would divert elders from the ministry of the word and prayer, and the visionary oversight of the church. In general, deacons should be ready to assist the elders of the church in any “service” that would support and promote the ministry of the word.

Specifically, deacons are called to the ministry of mercy, service, and outreach. This includes, but is not limited to, ministries which care for the building and grounds; provide practical assistance in job-hunting, housing matters, legal-aid, and child-care; serve and minister to the sick, poor, hurt, distressed and helpless; visit and comfort those in material need; provide aid to the victims of abuse and disaster; express social concerns of the church; oversee and carry out work that is concerned with the redemption of creation; and direct the attention of the church towards service and ministry both in the church and in the world.

Deacons are to receive and distribute the contributions of the congregation, giving personal attention and care to the whole benevolence program of the church. They are to have charge of all gifts and should exercise careful stewardship of all funds, goods, and properties of the congregation. In all of their duties, deacons are to exercise their gifts to prepare all God’s people for the work of Christian service in order to build up the body of Christ. (9/16/03)

Unity, Uniformity, and Scriptural Interpretation

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be our ultimate authority, without error in all that they intend to teach, and altogether sufficient for Christian faith and practice. We also believe that discerning God’s will regarding non-salvation issues can be difficult. We believe that our God knows the truth and that truth and salvation are found in Jesus Christ alone, but we see through a glass darkly on many issues not related to God’s plan of reconciliation for the world. Therefore, as the consistory of First Reformed Church, recognizing the need to be ever-reforming and always seeking a better understanding of God’s universal truth, we affirm that faithful Biblical interpretation can at times produce different understandings of God’s Word. We also affirm that faithful, prayerful discussion amongst believers who disagree is healthy for the body. We affirm that followers of Jesus can dwell in unity of faith without uniformity of thought and still minister alongside one another toward the task of ushering in the coming Kingdom of God. (3/19/07)