



RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Revised March 2022

Introduction

The following commitments are designed to help the people who attend Calvary Memorial Church relate to one another in ways that honor God and promote authentic relationships in the body of Christ, in accord with the Holy Spirit's activity (Gal. 5:16-23). We long to build a strong community of faith, which is a group of people who have joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of His love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that this kind of community isn't easy to achieve. Each of us brings our own expectations and agendas into the church. We long to prevent unmet expectations, unwanted surprises and the confusion and conflict that can result. Diversity usually leads to rich discussions and creative ministries, but sometimes it can lead to conflict. As James 4:1-2 warns, "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it."

As you read our Relational Commitments, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. We want you to be confident that these Commitments are based solidly on the Word of God. If your study does not answer all of your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to approach us. We would be happy to talk with you about these principles.

We encourage you to embrace these Commitments and formally join Calvary Memorial Church by going through our membership process. An application that defines the process of becoming a member may be obtained from our Church Office. As followers of Christ, we will do all we can to encourage you to grow in faith and godliness and to live a disciplined life that honors our Lord Jesus Christ and enhances the witness of His church.¹

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¹ These Relational Peacemaking Commitments are adapted from *The Peacemaker Church*. Used by permission of Peacemaker® Ministries. Edition 1.1, www.PeacemakerChurch.net

COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL ONE-ANOTHERING

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which *you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Eph. 4:1-3, 32).*

The proper attitude toward others (that promotes peace and unity) is clearly defined in Scripture through the "One Anothers." The "One Anothers" are twenty-five commands that tell us how we are to treat one another in the Body of Christ:

- contribute to one another's needs (Rom. 12:13)
- spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24)
- love one another (John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:9; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7-12; 2 John 1:5)
- be devoted to one another in brotherly love (Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- give preference to one another in honor (Rom. 12:10)
- accept one another (Rom. 15:17)
- admonish one another (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14)
- be united with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- serve one another through love (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:10)
- show forbearance to one another in love (Eph. 4:2)
- be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- be tender-hearted to one another (Eph. 4:32)
- forgive one another (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13)
- speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19)
- teach one another (Col. 3:16)
- encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11, 14; Heb. 3:13; 10:25)
- build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11)
- help one another (1 Thess. 5:14)
- be patient with one another (1 Thess. 5:14)
- be hospitable to one another (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9)
- be sympathetic toward one another (Rom. 12:15; 1 Pet. 3:8)
- restore one another (Gal. 6:1)
- bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- be humble toward one another (Phil. 2:3; 1 Pet. 3:8; 5:5)
- look out for one another's interests (Phil. 2:4)

Calvary Memorial Church is committed to living out these "One Anothers" in every aspect of our lives. Some of these commands are of a comforting nature. Others are of a corrective nature. It will take wisdom and patience to apply these truths at the appropriate time and in an appropriate manner. We believe that with God's enabling grace and our humble submission these "One Anothers" can characterize our lives. This will result in God-centered relationships and it will promote peace and unity.

COMMITMENT TO SERVING ONE ANOTHER

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

Adults Serving in the Church

We believe that serving others is a vital part of church membership and body life. We encourage all members to be involved in ministry within the local church.

Further, we believe service and ministry should flow out of a love for and humble submission to Christ and His church. Our practice is that individuals make a public profession of faith through baptism, as well as a public commitment to love, submit to, and serve the church through joining in membership prior to taking on a role of service and ministry.

We permit others (e.g., guest speakers and special music) to serve our congregation when they are known to be members in good standing of like-minded churches.

Children Serving in the Church

We believe one aspect of training up children in the church involves teaching them to love others through serving them. Our practice is to allow children who are not members to serve under the direction of adult members (typically, under their parents direction or the direction of leaders in that particular ministry). Even under these circumstances, there will be consideration given as to the character of the child in deciding if and where they may serve.

Children who are not members may serve under the guidelines above up until their graduation from CMC's Youth Bible Institute, at which time our standards for adults would apply (i.e., baptism² and membership would be required).

² We believe that children should be of an age and maturity to be able to communicate their faith as their own and show evidence of the fruit of conversion prior to being baptized. Our practice has been to wait until a child is at least 12 years of age prior to baptizing them, though that has not been a rigid rule.

COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will
be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9).*

Calvary Memorial Church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. Any attempt to seek unity and peace in the Body of Christ must first begin with an understanding of the source of divisions. Conflict begins with a desire to please ourselves and not seek after God’s best for us (James 4:1-4). As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness, and broken relationships are not acceptable for the people whom God has reconciled to Himself through the sacrifice of His only Son (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14).

We want to respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. We are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles:

Personal Peacemaking

- Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words, and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5).
- We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11).
- We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, our goal will be to talk *to* them, not *about* them.
- We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about others unless we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
- If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
- When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them. (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
- When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
- When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive (and restore) them as He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).
- When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will consider others’ interests, as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

Assisted Peacemaking

- When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in Calvary Memorial Church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other church leaders for assistance.
- When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from Calvary Memorial Church leaders or others they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).
- When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer and make a good faith effort to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.
- If a person coming to Calvary Memorial Church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his or her former church, or is under discipline from that church, we will require and assist him or her to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining Calvary Memorial Church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).
- When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in our *Commitment to Accountability and Church Discipline* (see page 7).
- If we have a legal dispute with or within Calvary Memorial Church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God’s command not to go into the civil court with a true Christian brother or sister (1 Cor. 6:1-8).
- Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know His infinite love and peace.

COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matt. 19:6).

God designed marriage to glorify Himself and to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, He established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord Jesus. We want all of you to know that you are welcome at Calvary Memorial Church.

Because Calvary Memorial Church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and discouraging divorce.

We require and provide thorough premarital counseling for all couples seeking marriage at CMC. The purpose is to ensure that two believers enter into Christian marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by actively participating in fellowship through which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25).

We also expect husbands to encourage one another to love, cherish, and spiritually lead their wives; and wives to respect and lovingly submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that, instead, can be resolved through Spirit-guided counseling, repentance, forgiveness, and ongoing discipleship.

It is the Elders' biblical conviction that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. We believe divorce is permissible when a spouse has been sexually involved with a person outside the marriage and remains unrepentant (Matt. 5:31-32), or when an unbelieving spouse abandons a marriage (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

Even though divorce is *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required* – nor is it necessarily wise or beneficial. God hates divorce (Mal 2:14-16). God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to Him (Ps. 103:8-12; Isa. 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph. 4:32-5:2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Col. 3:12-14; Gal. 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal redemptive discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matt. 18:12-20).

When someone is considering divorce, he or she is encouraged to bring the situation to our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate.

Separated spouses who have filed for divorce should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with the scriptural mandates for marriage.

We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate.

The Calvary Memorial Church leadership will support a decision to remarry only if we determine every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does Calvary Memorial Church. God graciously extends this same love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves Him (and us) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.

COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

The prudent see danger and take refuge (Prov. 27:12a).

Children are a blessing from God, and He calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

However, since sin affects every person and organization in the world, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

- We allow only established, formal members of Calvary Memorial Church to work with our youth (children or teenagers).³ Normally, a waiting period of six months after formal membership will be observed before becoming eligible to serve in youth ministries.
- We require adults who work with our youth (children or teenagers) to successfully complete a screening process (including regular background checks and child safety training).
- Our goal is to have teams of two or more working with our youth and to work in visibly observable settings.

If a child is harmed during Calvary Memorial Church activities, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, to hold the offending person responsible for their actions, and to report the incident to the proper authorities as mandated by law. We will also evaluate our practices and procedures, considering changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.

³ Children under age 18 of established members who have demonstrated faithful ability and will work alongside adult members in an assisting role are the only exemption to this formal membership rule. Occasionally, other teens who are regularly involved in CMC ministries and are in good standing with a like-minded church may assist with childcare.

COMMITMENT TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete
in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).

All Christians struggle with sin and its effect on our lives and our relationships. Whenever believers are unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and when needed, from church leaders (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; James 5:16). Therefore, we encourage believers to seek counsel from each other and confess sins to one another.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. As Christians counsel one another, we should treat each other with respect and courtesy, and avoid even the appearance of impropriety or impurity (Eph. 5:3). Therefore, we will be willing to seek counsel with at least two believers when it is appropriate to protect from unwarranted accusation and any appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). In cases where confidential information is shared, we will not try to compel those counseling us to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge the confidential information in a way that will be used for selfish or personal gains (Prov. 11:13, 25:9).

There will be times when it will be necessary for church leaders to become involved in the counseling process. Since our leaders often do not have sufficient time to meet with every person who asks for counseling, they will give priority to people who have formally joined the church (Gal. 6:10).

COMMITMENT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man
keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13).*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church, all members and adherents are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as is possible, there are times when it is biblically necessary or appropriate to reveal certain information to others in the process of helping people, such as in the following circumstances:

- When a counselor is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from the leadership of Calvary Memorial Church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church (Prov. 11:14).
- When it is believed that the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12).
- When a Christian refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20).
- When the leadership is required by law to report behavior that is against the law (Rom. 13:1).

To be clear, the intent in divulging any information is to help, never to harm.

COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).

A. Accountability and Discipline Are Signs of God's Love

God has established the church to reflect His character, wisdom, and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves His church so much that He sent His Son to die for her as Christ's bride, and is continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27, Rev. 19:7).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12). So it helps us to confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as "discipline." The Bible never presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic, or harsh, as modern society often does. True discipline originates from God Himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love. "The Lord disciplines those He loves" (Heb. 12:6). "Blessed is the man You discipline, O LORD, the man You teach from Your law" (Ps. 94:12). "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline" (Rev. 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a God-honoring family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive, and encouraging. This process, sometimes called "formative discipline," involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship, and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

God's discipline, as in a family with growing children, may also have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, He corrects us. One way He does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back to the path of godliness. This process, which is sometimes called "corrective" or "restorative" discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is always to be administered in humility and love, with the goal of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God (1 Pet. 2:12).

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and who lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who attempt to bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so that they can play a piece properly. We applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they err so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in His Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to helping one another obey God's command to be "self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined" (Titus 1:8).

B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal, and Informal

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks Him in prayer, and draws on His grace to change and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12-13). This is why the Bible says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within Calvary Memorial Church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. "If he will not listen, take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher or church leader. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called "formal discipline."

C. Formal Discipline May Involve the Entire Church

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to "tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church leaders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover. The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his or her sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from leaders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior. This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if leaders deem it to be appropriate (Matt. 18:17; 1 Tim. 5:20).

As the disciplinary process progresses, leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, withholding the Lord's Supper, removing from office, withdrawing of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removing from membership and church attendance (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, and upon careful and prayerful consideration by the elders, the church will be informed. Each church member's responsibility then, will be to personally seek the individual's repentance and restoration. If the individual refuses to heed the warning of the church, he or she will be publicly dismissed from the church and treated like an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat him or her as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the gospel to them, remind them of God's holiness and mercy, and call them to repent and put their faith in Christ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our leaders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11). We realize that our natural human response to correction is often to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen Calvary Memorial Church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability if discipline is in process. Although we are free to stop attending the church at any time, we agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not be made effective until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage our repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 13:17).

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and leaders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from their sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual repents, and leaders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14). Genuine repentance would include:

1. Voluntarily transparent in disclosing the full extent of the sin.
2. Not downplaying sin (minimizing, blame-shifting, excusing).
3. Not despairing over sin with a self-centered, worldly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) having more concern about the pain and consequences sin causes to oneself rather than the offense and dishonor it is to God.
4. Accepting the consequences of sin with a contented trust that God will take care of the outcome, rather than trying to manage the outcome (Luke 23:40-41).
5. Asking for forgiveness, pursuing reconciliation, and making amends with all those who have been hurt or affected by the sin (Luke 19:1-10).
6. Proactively taking steps to change, including being teachable and submitting willingly to the counsel and direction of church leadership.

Where known, people who have been excluded from another church because of church discipline issues will not be allowed to partake of the ordinances, become members, or participate in the regular fellowship of Calvary Memorial Church, until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, **or** until such time as our leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate.

D. Additional Instructions Pertaining to an Elder

Scripture provides additional instructions concerning a sinning elder. 1 Timothy 5:20 says, "*Those [elders] who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear*" (NKJV). Whether "*sinning*" means (1) *any* disqualifying sin, or (2) "*continuing in sin*" (NASB) or "*persisting in sin*" (ESV), we feel it is wise to give an explanation to the congregation for the elder's disqualification whether he repents or not (Matthew 18 will be followed if there is no repentance).

We believe that an explanation is wise and necessary for several reasons:

- Elders hold the highest position of trust in the church. Hebrews 13:7 calls church members to follow the example set by their leaders in both faith and conduct. While the church grieves when any member is caught in sin, it is even harder for a church to deal with the fall of one of its leaders whom they have looked to as an example. That is a violation of corporate trust and not merely a personal matter for the elder to deal with.
- Elders are ordained publicly based on their character as affirmed by the congregation. If a man is affirmed publicly, it is appropriate that his removal from office be just as public, and that those who affirmed his character are informed about the reason he is no longer qualified. If an elder steps down for personal reasons, not because of disqualification, an explanation will still be given to the congregation to avoid confusion and wrong assumptions.
- Elders have intimate knowledge of the church's practices regarding church discipline and the operation of the elder board that puts them in an advantageous position. This means an elder could leverage that knowledge to control the outcome of what is done or not done regarding his sin. By requiring the reasons for disqualification to be made public, the church is further protected from the kind of "leader partiality" 1 Timothy 5:21 warns against.
- Elders are held to a higher standard in Scripture. Because the level of the authority entrusted to an elder by God is serious, his removal from office is also serious, and should be dealt with openly and forthrightly. Again, there is biblical precedence for this in 1 Timothy 5:20, where a sinning elder is to be rebuked in the presence of all. It is clear that this passage is holding elders to a higher standard, and that standard involves public exposure of their sin.

We believe that a man may be restored to the office of elder. However, a disqualifying offense may be compounded by its multilayer betrayal of (1) God, (2) wife and family, (3) the witness of the gospel in his life, (4) the trust of the people within the church and (5) the reputation of the gospel outside of the church. Therefore, the process of restoring a man to the office of elder would likely be lengthy and involve the following:

1. Genuine repentance. If there is genuine repentance (see section C above), forgiveness would be granted and received immediately based on the blood of Christ.
2. Trustworthiness. There is a difference between being forgiven and being trustworthy. Depending on the sin, it may take a while (possibly years) for the man to prove himself trustworthy. He should be in no hurry to expect or demand restoration to the office of elder. Instead, his life should first demonstrate evidence of humility, transparency, accountability, and faithfulness to God, family, and church.
3. Qualification. Having demonstrated trustworthiness, he would also need to meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 including being affirmed by the elders and congregation in accordance with the usual elder and deacon nomination process.

E. Additional Instructions Pertaining to a Sex Offender

As mentioned above, CMC is devoted to the restoration of believers who evidence the fruit of genuine repentance in their lives (Matthew 18:15-20 and 2 Corinthians 2:5-11). At the same time, one of a shepherd's greatest responsibilities is the safeguard and protection of the flock from harm, including protection from potential threats whether spiritual, physical, emotional, legal or financial in nature. Therefore, we have created a policy that allows a sex offender to attend worship at CMC while providing for the safety and wellbeing of the congregation. This policy is available upon request.