

GENERAL OPERATING BY-LAW NUMBER 1

A By-Law relating generally to the transaction of the affairs of Summerside Community Church Fellowship Baptist (a Federal Corporation)

WHEREAS it is determined necessary for the efficient and effective governance of the Corporation in compliance with provisions of the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act S.C. 2009, to replace General Operating By-Law No. 1 with a new general operating by-law;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ENACTED as a By-Law of SUMMERSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST (hereinafter referred to as "Summerside") as follows:

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 In this General Operating By-Law and all other by-laws and resolutions of Summerside unless the context otherwise requires, the following definitions shall apply:

- (a) "Act" means the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act S.C. 2009, c.23 including the Regulations made pursuant to the Act, and any statute or regulations that may be substituted, as amended from time to time;
- (b) "Administrative Staff" mean the persons serving in an administrative role whether they are paid, unpaid, part-time, or full-time with regard to compensation.
- (c) "Articles" mean the Letters Patent, Supplementary Letters Patent, Articles of Continuance, and Articles of Amendment of Summerside, if any, as from time to time amended or supplemented by further Articles of Amendment;
- (d) "Associate Pastors" mean those men called to specific pastoral responsibilities under the Lead Pastor's leadership and oversight. As needed, an associate pastor, when unanimously recommended by the Elders, may be a non-voting Elder.
- (e) "Board" means the Voting Elders who are the Board of Directors of the Corporation pursuant to the Act;
- (f) "Board Policy" is a policy of the Board of Directors which shall assist in governance of the Church, and which does not need subsequent approval of the Members;
- (g) "Clerk" means the member responsible for preparing minutes of all church business meetings, keeping an accurate membership roll and carrying on correspondence relative to the membership.
- (h) "Constitution" means the General Operating By-Law and any Policy Statement adopted by Summerside from time to time;
- (i) "Corporation" means Summerside as defined herein;
- (j) "Deacon" means a male or female member who shall assist the Elders and/or the pastors by performing services, administration, and implementation of a ministry.
- (k) "Elders" mean the men elected as the Elders of Summerside. There shall be three (3) categories of Elder: (i) paid staff member and non-voting (Pastors designated also as Elders), (ii) unpaid and voting (Voting Elders), and (iii) unpaid and non-voting (Associate Elders). Only Voting Elders will be deemed

to be Directors of the Corporation for purposes of the Act;

- (l) "Summerside" (also referred to as "the Church") means the legal entity incorporated as a corporation without share capital under Letters Patent dated October 29, 1999, and named Summerside Community Church Fellowship Baptist, through which its Members may worship, fellowship and serve together as a New Testament Church;
- (m) "Treasurer" means a member of the church, accountable to the Elders or their designate and responsible for keeping an accurate account of all monies received and disbursed, for carrying on the banking business in the name of the church, for paying all the current accounts according to the budget of the church and for the preparation of the budget.
- (n) "General Operating By-Law" means this by-law and any other by-laws of Summerside intended to amend or replace the General Operating By-Law herein;
- (o) "Guiding Principles" means a Policy Statement consisting of mission, accountability and boundary principles and determined by the Elders and the Lead Pastor and authorizing the leadership of the Lead Pastor and his staff.
- (p) "Lead Pastor" means the man responsible to lead the church in fulfilling the church's mission, vision and ministry. The lead pastor shall be a non-voting elder.
- (q) "Member" means a member of Summerside;
- (r) "Members" or "Membership" means the collective membership of Summerside. There are two (2) categories of member: (i) member, and (ii) associate member.
- (s) "Ministry Leader" means a person who is responsible under a pastor's oversight for a specific area of ministry whether they are paid, unpaid, part-time, or full-time with regard to compensation.
- (t) "Ministry Staff" means Associate Pastors and Ministry Leaders appointed for a ministry management purpose, whether they are paid, unpaid, part-time, or full-time with regard to compensation.
- (u) "Ministry Team" means a group of believers organized to carry out specific tasks of ministry. Each team's existence, specific purpose, job description, and life span are determined by the pastors and affirmed by the Elders.
- (v) "Policy Statements" means the Policy Statements adopted as part of the Constitution from time to time concerning practical applications of biblical principles and Christian conduct and as outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual;
- (w) "Statement of Faith" means the statement that outlines the foundational beliefs of Summerside for faith and practice.

2. INTERPRETATION

2.1 In this General Operating By-Law and all other by-laws and resolutions of Summerside unless the context otherwise requires, the following interpretation shall apply:

- (a) Singular words include the plural and vice versa;
- (b) Words using the masculine gender include the feminine unless the context would indicate otherwise; and
- (c) Words referring to person or persons do not include corporations, partnerships, trusts and unincorporated organizations.

2.2 Headings used in the by-laws of Summerside are for convenience of reference only and shall not affect the

construction or interpretation thereof.

- 2.3** If any of the provisions contained in this General Operating By-Law are inconsistent with those contained in the Articles or the Act, the provisions contained in the Articles or the Act, as the case may be, shall prevail.
- 2.4** This Constitution and any other By-laws of Summerside shall be strictly interpreted at all times in accordance with and subject to the purpose and the Statement of Faith, which for purposes of this General Operating By-law are incorporated by reference and made a part hereof.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1** The purpose of Summerside is to glorify God by helping people grow in a relationship with Jesus (Colossians 1:28) and by working together to fulfill his command to share his message with the world (Matthew 28:19-20).

4. AFFILIATION

- 4.1** Summerside is affiliated with The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada ('Fellowship') and, as such, this church will seek to participate with programs that are offered, give from its income to Fellowship and FEB Central ministries, and help promote the work of the Fellowship and FEB Central. This affiliation shall be a voluntary, based upon a covenant relationship among likeminded congregations which remain legally autonomous while interdependent in mission.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Definition of Membership

Summerside is comprised of persons who profess a personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, have been baptized as believers according to the New Testament, and actively follow the Lord Jesus Christ in discipleship.

5.2 Qualification for Membership

Individuals may qualify to be a Member if, in the unanimous opinion of the Board of Elders, such individuals fulfill the definition of Membership as set out in Section 5.1 herein, fulfill the Requirements of Membership as set out in Section 5.3 herein, and complete the procedure for admission into Membership set out in Section 5.4 herein and are not under the discipline of Summerside as set out in the Policies and Procedures Manual. Individuals may also be admitted by restoration, following church discipline set out in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

5.3 Requirements of Membership

An applicant will be considered for membership when they:

- (i) Are at least 16 years of age,
- (ii) Give a clear understanding of the basic teachings of the gospel,
- (iii) Give a clear statement of faith in Jesus Christ,
- (iv) Are baptized as a believer,
- (v) Attend a new members' class,
- (vi) Attend Summerside for at least three months, and
- (vii) Sign a written application for Membership, indicating a commitment to adhere and be subject to the authority of the church as expressed in this document.

The call of a Pastor includes acceptance into membership of him and his spouse.

5.4 Procedures of Membership

A person shall be considered a member as follows:

- (i) When the requirements for membership in Section 5.3 have been fulfilled,

- (ii) When an interview with an Elder has been completed,
 - (iii) When the name of the person has been published in the weekly bulletin the previous two weeks and no one has expressed a concern regarding the candidate's spiritual life that the Elders deem sufficient to disqualify them from membership, and
 - (iv) When Elders give final approval to accept the person for membership at a directors meeting.
- Summerside does not transfer membership from other churches.

5.5 Privileges of Membership

In addition to participating in the regular life of the church body, members are able to serve in ministry teaching and leadership roles. Every member may participate fully in meetings that pertain to the membership of the church. Every member is entitled to one vote on all matters requiring a congregational vote in accordance with Section 5.10(h). In some circumstances, the Voting Elders may establish an appropriate process for voting including advance voting. In such cases, the procedure outlined by the Voting Elders will be followed.

5.6 Responsibilities of Membership

Every member of the church is expected to live under and abide by the Statement of Faith, By-laws, and Policies and Procedures of Summerside. Every member is expected to be faithful in worship, discipleship, personal growth, service, and giving. Recognizing that Christians are ministers of reconciliation, this church expects its members to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Every member shall seek to exercise his or her unique God-given skills and gifts for the mutual benefit of all the church body and will respectfully follow the leadership of the Lead Pastor and Elders.

5.7 Role of Members

The primary role of the Members shall be to serve as the ministers of the Church as they reach out to unchurched people and care for the needs of one another within the Church. The following decisions of the Church shall require the approval of the Members by a simple majority (unless explicitly stated otherwise in this document) of those voting:

- (a) Elections to the Board of Elders.
- (b) The calling of the Lead Pastor.
- (c) Approval of an annual budget.
- (d) Approval of the annual financial statements.
- (e) Appointment of the auditors for the current fiscal year.
- (f) Changes to the Statement of Faith, the Operating By-Law(s) and the Articles.
- (g) Purchasing, selling, transferring, mortgaging, hypothecating or pledging of lands and/or buildings.
- (h) Dissolving the church.
- (i) Other matters as called upon by the Elders.

5.8 Discipline of Members

- (a) This church will make every effort to adhere to the principles of church discipline as set forth in the Bible, particularly in Matthew 18:15-17. The guiding motivation behind church discipline is the commitment to love others in the context of truth. The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church, to edify believers by deterring sin, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct.

- (b) Any member who is not willing to adhere to the requirements and/or responsibilities set out in Sections 5.1, 5.3, 5.6 and 5.8 (a) may be terminated from membership and lose his or her privileges as outlined in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

5.9 Termination of Membership

Membership will be terminated by any of the following:

- (a) Death.
- (b) Church Discipline.
- (c) Resignation.
- (d) When a member has joined another church unless accepted as an associate member as stated in 5.11 herein.
- (e) When the Elders agree that the member has indicated by their extended absence, and lack of response to attempted contacts, that they no longer desire to be part of the church.

5.10 Meetings of the Church and Its Membership

- (a) **Sunday Services:** The church will meet regularly each Sunday for worship, preaching, teaching, evangelism, and fellowship, and additionally, may meet on other days the Elders so determine. These particular meetings are open to everyone and shall be conducted under the direction of the Lead Pastor or his appointee.
- (b) **Annual Meeting:** An Annual Meeting shall be held at a time approved by the Elders within four (4) months of the end of the fiscal year and with twenty-one (21) days' adequate notice given to the congregation. Report from the Elders shall be given. Financial reports shall be approved by the congregation at this time. Election of Elders will also be held. Other business as determined by the Elders will be conducted.
- (c) **Other Business Meetings:** Other business meetings may be called at any time by the Board of Elders upon the giving of twenty-one (21) days' notice when matters are to be voted upon. Business meetings where matters are to be discussed, but no voting by members takes place, can be called by the Board of Elders on a shorter notice period in the discretion of the Board of Elders, provided that a weekend intervenes so that notice of the meeting can be announced at regular worship services.
- (d) **Members Calling a Members' Meeting:** The Voting Elders shall call a special meeting of members in accordance with Section 167 of the Act, on written requisition of members carrying not less than 5% of the voting rights. If the Voting Elders do not call a meeting within twenty-one (21) days of receiving the requisition, any member who signed the requisition may call the meeting.
- (e) **Notice of Meetings:** Notice of the time and place of a meeting of members shall be given to each member entitled to vote at the meeting by affixing the notice, no later than twenty-one (21) days before the day on which the meeting is to be held, to a notice board on which information respecting the church's activities is regularly posted and that is located in the main facilities of the corporation and by notice at the main worship services on at least two Sundays previous to such meetings.
- (f) **Change the Manner of Giving Notice:** Pursuant to subsection 197(1) (Fundamental Change) of the Act, a special resolution of the members is required to make any amendment to the by-laws of the church to change the manner of giving notice to members entitled to vote at a meeting of members.
- (g) **Quorum:** At all meetings, whether regular, special or adjourned, fifteen percent (15%) of the current members in good standing shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. In the event that a quorum is not present, the Meeting may proceed but no voting may take place. Motions brought forward in the Meeting must be ratified by majority vote of a quorum of the Members present at a

subsequent Business Meeting, the date which shall be established prior to adjournment of the Meeting in progress. At the Ratification Meeting, motions brought forward from the previous meeting shall be explained by the chair, with the mover and seconder identified. Discussions on the motion(s) brought forward will be allowed, but may be limited to a time period decided by a majority vote of the Board. The Chairman (or in his absence, a designate appointed by Board Resolution) shall act as Chair of all Membership Meetings and shall only be entitled to vote in the event of an equality of votes (in which event he shall have the casting vote), or in the event of a secret ballot.

- (h) Voting: The Members shall vote according to the following:
 - a. An active Member has the right to a single vote in person.
 - b. A vote may be taken either in a meeting or at other times by written or electronic means.
 - c. When a vote takes place outside a meeting, there shall be at least one week's notice of the means by which a ballot vote will be taken.
 - d. If taken in a meeting, votes may be cast by visual, written, and/or electronic sign.
 - e. If there a vote outside a meeting and votes are collected by written or electronic means, the direct receipt of the vote must be within a time period set by the Elders.
 - f. No abstentions shall be counted in the vote tally.
 - g. When ballot votes have been counted and the result has been communicated to the members, the ballots are to be destroyed.

5.11 Associate Membership

In exceptional circumstances, Summerside will allow for individuals to hold a dual membership (called Associate membership), especially those who are Christian workers and students. Such individuals will have all the privileges of regular members. Candidates for such membership will follow the approved membership interview process and their dual membership must be with a church of like faith and practice. The Board of Elders will decide upon such exceptions on a case by case basis.

5.12 Amending This Section

Pursuant to subsection 197(1) (Fundamental Change) of the Act, a special resolution of the members is required to make any amendments to this section of the by-laws if those amendments affect membership rights and/or conditions described in paragraphs 197(1)(e), (h), (l) or (m).

6. VOTING AND ASSOCIATE ELDERS

6.1 Elder Selection

There shall be between 3 and 25 Voting Elders, with the actual number being as determined from time to time by the Elders. There may also be Associate Elders, whose number will not exceed that of the Voting Elders. Voting Elders shall be active Church Members selected for three-year terms by the following process:

- (a) An Elder must be a man who is biblically qualified according to 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- (b) A Voting Elder and his wife, father, mother, child, brother or sister, or spouse of such Person is not an employee, agent or individual that is receiving remuneration either directly or indirectly from the Church.
- (c) Any active Member of the Church may submit to the Elders a recommendation for a potential Elder who meets the qualification of (a).
- (d) Potential Elders must complete a training course taught by the Lead Pastor or his designate covering the mission, vision, and structure of the Church.

- (e) Potential Elders must sign a covenant to uphold the highest standards of participation, service, supportiveness, and giving with regard to the Church.
- (f) The Lead Pastor and the Elders shall present to the Congregation for approval a selection of candidates that have been certified by the Elders as qualified to serve as Elders.
- (g) Approving Elders shall require a seventy-five (75%) majority vote with at least fifteen percent (15%) of the membership of the church voting.

6.2 Elder Term of Service

Each Elder may serve a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms and may serve again after a break of one year or more. Immediate family members of the Lead Pastor, other pastors, and the Staff shall not serve on the Board. The term of an Elder may be vacated by resignation, by removal as a Church Member, or by action of the Voting Elders, or if a family member is hired. The remainder of a vacated term shall be filled by the Voting Elders in consultation with the Lead Pastor.

6.3 Elder Role

The role of the Elders is to oversee all aspects of the church including the appointment of deacons, a treasurer, a clerk, and any committee/team member. One of the roles of the Elders shall be to provide support and accountability for the Lead Pastor by writing concise Guiding Principles. All Elders shall be sent at least 24-hours' notice of every meeting by electronic, verbal, or written means.

7. BOARD

7.1 Board Role

The Board, comprised of the Voting Elders, shall direct operating and financial decisions through the written policy in the Guiding Principles. The Board shall entrust the leadership of the Church to the Lead Pastor and shall entrust the management of the Church to the Staff under the direction of the Lead Pastor. Board action shall be by simple majority of all Voting Elders, whether or not present and voting. A majority of the Voting Elders present, which includes participation by electronic or written means, shall constitute a quorum for action. Board meetings shall occur regularly and at other special times as needed when called by the Lead Pastor or the Chair or a majority of the Voting Elders. The Board shall be sent at least 24-hours' notice of every meeting by electronic, verbal, or written means. Such notice may be waived by unanimous consent.

7.2 Board Officers

Each year the Board shall elect a Chair, a Vice-chair and a Secretary. The Chair shall enforce the Accountability Principles and shall lead the Board when discussing the Lead Pastor's leadership in fulfilling the Mission Principles and adhering to the Boundary Principles. The Chair and the Lead Pastor shall work together to lead the Board in all other discussions. The Vice-chair will serve in the absence of the Chair. The Secretary shall maintain and distribute the current edition of the Guiding Principles and other Board documents.

8. LEAD PASTOR

8.1 Lead Pastor Call and Selection

In the event of a vacancy in the position of Lead Pastor, the Chair of the Elders shall invite FEB Central to counsel the Elders in the process of finding and calling a new Lead Pastor who has demonstrated the ability to lead this Church to the next level of effectiveness in the achievement of its mission. The Elders shall fill the role of the Lead Pastor with an appropriate interim candidate until a permanent Lead Pastor is in place. Calling the new Lead Pastor shall require a vote by the Elders to propose the candidate to the members who will vote to approve the call of the candidate by a 75% majority of those members voting with at least fifteen percent (15%) of the membership of the church voting. Dismissing the Lead Pastor shall be the responsibility of the Voting Elders.

8.2 Lead Pastor Role

The role of the Lead Pastor is to lead the Church to accomplish its mission. The Lead Pastor shall lead the Congregation by teaching biblical truth, casting vision, and advancing the mission. The Lead Pastor shall lead the Elders by guiding its discussion of Mission Principles. The Lead Pastor shall lead the Staff by directing them in their management of all Church operations. The Lead Pastor shall be accountable to the Elders.

9. CHURCH STAFF

9.1 Ministry Staff Role

Ministry staff, including Pastors, shall manage areas of Church operation. Staff positions shall be created, filled, vacated, or discontinued based on ministry needs. The hiring, directing, compensating, and dismissing of any and all Church Staff shall be the responsibility of the Lead Pastor under the authority and direction of the Voting Elders. The call of a Pastor includes acceptance into membership of him and his wife, if married.

9.2 Administrative Staff Role

An administrative staff person shall serve under the oversight of a ministry staff person as determined by the Lead Pastor from time to time.

10. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

10.1 Policies

When policies are written, and approved by the Voting Elders, they will immediately become part of the operating policy of the church. All policies shall be included in what is identified as the Policies and Procedures Manual. Major changes in policy shall be communicated to the membership at the annual meeting.

10.2 Procedures

Procedures for this church may be written documents or generally understood operating procedures. Should they be written, they should be kept on file in the church office and accessible to all church members on proper notice. All procedures shall be included in what is identified as the Policies and Procedures Manual. However, since they may be construed to be generally understood operating procedures, should a question or dispute arise concerning a directive that cannot be resolved, the Voting Elders will be responsible for clarifying the procedure and preparing a notice to be communicated to the church at the Annual Meeting.

11. AMENDMENTS

11.1 The Statement of Faith, Articles and this General Operating By-Law may be amended or added by a vote of the members provided that:

- (a) Such proposed additions or amendments are recommended by the Elders; and
- (b) Notice of the proposed additions or amendments is given to the Members in the notice calling the meeting to consider the proposed changes; and
- (c) At least two-thirds of the Members voting approve such changes; and
- (d) Any repeal or amendment of the General Operating By-Law may be enforced and/or acted upon while the approval of the General Operating By-law is under consideration by the Canada Revenue Agency Charities Directorate, or any agency in replacement thereof, is received. Should a disapproval of the General Operating By-law in whole or in part be received, the repeal or amendment not approved by the Canada Revenue Agency Charities Directorate will immediately cease to be effective.

12. FISCAL AND ELECTIVE YEAR

12.1 The fiscal year-end of Summerside shall be determined by the Voting Elders from time to time as they in their sole discretion deem advisable. The elective year shall commence with the fiscal year.

13. INDEMNITY

13.1 Except such costs, charges or expenses as are occasioned by his own wrongful act or willful neglect or default, every Elder, Pastor, Associate Pastor or officer of Summerside or other person who has undertaken or is about to undertake any liability on behalf of Summerside or any affiliated organization and their heirs, executors and administrators, and estate and effects, respectively, shall be indemnified and saved harmless, from and against:

- (a) all costs, charges and expenses which such person sustains or incurs in or about any action, suit or proceedings which is brought, commenced or prosecuted against him, or in respect of any act, deed,

matter or thing whatsoever, made, done or permitted by him, in carrying out the duties of his office or in respect of any such liability; and

- (b) all other costs, charges and expenses which he sustains or incurs in or about or in relation to the affairs thereof.

14. GENERAL PROVISIONS

14.1 Head Office

The head office of the Corporation shall be in the City of London, in the County of Middlesex and the Province of Ontario.

14.2 Execution of Documents

Properly approved contracts, documents or any instruments in writing requiring the signature of Summerside shall be signed by any two Voting Elders and all contracts, documents and instruments in writing so signed shall be binding upon the Corporation without further authorization or formality. The Board shall have the power from time to time by resolution to appoint an officer or officers on behalf of the Corporation to sign specific contracts, documents and instruments in writing. The Board may give the Corporation's power of attorney to any registered dealer in securities for the purposes of the transferring of and dealing with any stocks, bonds, and other securities of the Corporation. The seal of the Corporation when required may be affixed to contracts, documents, and instruments in writing signed as aforesaid by any officer or officers appointed.

14.3 Lands and/or Buildings

The purchase, sale, transfer, mortgage, hypothecation or pledge of lands and/or buildings shall not occur except in accordance with a resolution recommended by the Board and passed by at least a two-thirds majority vote of the Members which vote was called for this purpose.

14.4 Banking

All cheques, bills of exchange or other orders for the payment of money, notes or other evidences of indebtedness issued, accepted or endorsed in the name of Summerside shall be signed by such officer or officers, agent or agents of Summerside and in such manner as shall from time to time be determined by resolution of the Board.

All funds of Summerside shall be deposited from time to time to the credit of Summerside in such bank or banks or trust companies or with such bankers as the Board may approve.

The securities of Summerside may be deposited for safekeeping with one or more banks, trust companies or other financial institutions to be selected by the Board. Any and all securities so deposited may be withdrawn from time to time only upon the written order signed by such officer or officers, agent or agents of Summerside and in such manner as shall, from time to time, be determined by resolution of the Board and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances.

15. RULES, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- 15.1** The Board of Directors may prescribe such rules, policies and guidelines not inconsistent with this By-law relating to the management and operation of the Church as the Board of Directors deem expedient. The Board of Directors may also prescribe such rules, policies and guidelines not inconsistent with this By-law relating to matters of theology, doctrine and the practice of worship, provided that such rules, policies and guidelines relating to matters of theology, doctrine and the practice of worship shall have force and effect only until the next annual Meeting of the Members when they shall be confirmed, and failing such confirmation, shall cease to have any force and effect.

16. AMENDMENTS UNDER THE ACT

- 16.1** Notwithstanding the Act, any Articles may be amended by a Special Resolution of the Board of Directors and sanctioned by an affirmative vote on a Special Resolution of the Members voting in person at a meeting duly called for the purpose of considering the said amendment, provided that notice of such Membership Meeting shall be given in the Church Bulletin on four (4) consecutive Sundays prior to such Membership Meeting and provided further that the notice shall state the proposed amendment and the purpose thereof.
- 16.2** Subject to the provisions of section 16.3 hereof, all prior By-laws, resolutions and other enactments of the Corporation inconsistent in either form or content with the provisions of this By-law heretofore enacted or made are repealed upon the enactment of this General Operating By-law.
- 16.3** The provisions of section 16.2 shall not extend to any By-law or resolution heretofore enacted for the purpose of providing to the Board of Directors the power or authority to borrow or otherwise carry on financial arrangements for Summerside.

- 16.4** The repeal of prior By-Laws, resolutions and other enactments shall not impair in any way the validity of any act or thing previously done pursuant to any such repealed By-Law, resolution or other enactment.

ENACTED this _____ day of _____, 2017 as evidenced by the signatures of the Board Chair and Secretary.

Per _____ - Board Chair

Per _____ - Secretary

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we the Church Board have hereunto set our hands at the City of London, in the Province of Ontario, _____, this _____ day of _____, 2017.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

CONFIRMED by a two-thirds (2/3rds) vote of the Members of the Church at the City of London in the Province of Ontario, this _____ day of June, 2017, as evidenced by the signatures of the Board Chair and Secretary.

Per _____ - Board Chair

Per _____ - Secretary

FELLOWSHIP OF EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCHES IN CANADA

Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality *Adopted November 13, 2018, amend November 13, 2024*

1. Fellowship Policy Statements [Article 15.1(d)]

Policy Statements are expressions of biblical convictions that we hold as Fellowship Baptists that have been approved by the delegates at a National Conference that are consistent with our Affirmation of Faith. We must strive to achieve some standard of expectation that will allow MEMBER churches while not impairing the concept of theological integrity on the other.

Policy Statements are binding upon MEMBER churches. Policy Statements are initially drafted or amended by National Council or by not less than five percent (5%) of MEMBER churches. Policy Statements will have no binding effect until approved by a vote of delegates of MEMBER churches of not less than two-thirds (2/3s) by Special Resolution.

2. The Biblical Definition of Marriage

The biblical definition of marriage continues to shift within the culture. In the broadest sense, “marriage” is used to refer to the formal union of consenting partners into a personal and familial relationship, typically involving sexual intimacy.

As Christians, we believe that God is the originator and designer of marriage, that He has communicated His design through the Bible, and that His design is binding on how we define and practice marriage.

Therefore, notwithstanding the broader sense in which marriage may be defined by the culture, we adopt the following definition of marriage for the belief, doctrine, and religious practice of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada:

The term “marriage” is reserved for the formalized covenant relationship between one man and one woman who commit themselves through legal declaration to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence. Marriage is monogamous, heterosexual, and intended for life.

Throughout this policy statement the terms “one man” and “one woman” are understood as referring to person who are biologically male and female from birth.

3. A Biblical Understanding of Human Sexuality

(Please refer to the Appendix for further support for the following points)

3.1. God’s Original Design for Human Sexuality

- 3.1.1.** God’s revealed will for the fulfillment of human sexual desires, only in faithful heterosexual marriage, provides for human flourishing as individuals and families, and human marriage in obedience to God’s will serves as an illustration of God’s relationship to His people.

- 3.1.2.** The Bible teaches us that God's will is that we choose to express our sexual identity either in faithful heterosexual marriage or celibate singleness.
- 3.1.3.** God created humans in His image as relational beings existing biologically as two distinct sexes, either male or female. God's created design is honoured when we align our self-identity with our biological sex. Gender / sexual distinction is honoured when each sees the opposite sex as their equal and when the natural object of sexual desire is agreed to be the opposite sex.
The Bible affirms that human sexuality and gender are fundamental to biblical teaching on human relationships, not solely biblical morality. Due to sin and brokenness, human experience of sex and gender is not always that which God the Creator originally designed. In light of our foundational understanding of creation, fall, and redemption, the Bible further affirms that through the salvation of Christ and His regeneration of the believer's heart we have been freed from wicked, unnatural, and evil desires and behaviour. Therefore, by the Holy Spirit's power we can resist any sinful desire and abstain from any behaviour identity alignment that contradicts biblical teaching.
- 3.1.4.** The Bible affirms that all people are loved by God because they are made in God's image. God's love for persons who define their sexuality and sexual orientation contrary to biblical principles does not imply His approval of that definition or orientation or of the practices associated with these perspectives.
- 3.1.5.** As creatures made by God, our true identity and highest joy are found in obedience to the revealed will of our Creator, in respect to both our sexual identity and the sexual relations we choose, as in all of life.
The Bible teaches that any tension between one's biological sex and one's experience of gender will not be resolved by the adoption of an identity contradictory with one's birth, sex, as determined by biology.
- 3.1.6.** The Bible teaches that celibate singleness, like marriage, is a gift from God. The inability to act on one's sexual desires does not render one less human. Rather, celibate single people demonstrate aspects of what God intends for us as humans that are less apparent in married people.

3.2. The Fall: Human Brokenness and the Distortion of God's Design for Human Sexuality

- 3.2.1.** The Bible declares that humanity's fall into sin has profoundly distorted human relationships with God and others, including the distortion of our human sexuality.
- 3.2.2.** Sexual brokenness results from this distortion and causes confusion and temptation to violate God's will in the expression of our sexual desires. Although sexual temptation is not itself sin, Jesus taught that the decision to act on this temptation in thought or behaviour is sinful.
- 3.2.3.** The Bible declares that sexual sin harms everyone involved. It is counterproductive to the flourishing of society and individuals, and it sometimes

results in humiliation, degradation, abuse, or exploitation that violates the inherent dignity of all people as God's image bearers.

- 3.2.4.** The biblical doctrine of original sin teaches us that many human desires are inherently sinful and thus must be managed for good and denied in practice, and this truth is recognized implicitly by all humans.

3.3 Redemption: Christ's Restored Design for Human Sexuality

- 3.3.1.** The Bible declares that the Son of God became human to restore our broken world through His obedient life, death, and resurrection. As new creations in Christ, we are transformed in both our understanding of human sexuality and our sexual practice.
- 3.3.2.** Jesus Christ reaffirmed, through His teaching, God's creational intention. Namely, that the fulfillment and enjoyment of sexual desire take place only within the context of the covenant marriage of one man and one woman. Marriage established as one-flesh relationship that goes beyond a physical union and is more than either a temporary relationship of convenience intended to provide personal pleasure, or a contract that binds two people together in a legal partnership. Marriage establishes an emotional and spiritual oneness that enables both partners to respond to the spiritual, physical and social needs of the other.
- 3.3.3.** The risen Christ bestowed upon all His followers the Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers all believers to obey God's will and enables us to express holiness and purity in the expression of our human sexuality.
- 3.3.4.** The Church is designed to be an eternal community where people are enabled to experience healthy, restored relationships with God and others. Sexual gratification, while a good gift from God, is not necessary for the enjoyment of this glorious Church community, nor does its glory compare to it.
- 3.3.5.** The Church is called to affirm the dignity of all people, treating everyone with respect and creating a grace-filled community where our sexual brokenness can be restored, even as we experience sexual temptation or failure. The Church is called to provide love, support, and accountability.
- 3.3.6.** Sexual experience is not absolutely necessary for human flourishing and fulfillment, as evidenced by the life of Jesus Himself and His call to some of His followers to live in celibate singleness.

4. A Summary of the Appendix

4.1. Explanation of the Appendix

We believe Article 2 and Article 3 provide an accurate summary of the Bible's teaching on marriage and human sexuality. The Appendix provides an extended rationale for how and why we have concluded this. Because we believe the Bible is the written Word of God and thus authoritative in all that it teaches, the rationale in the Appendix is critical. The following paragraphs, 4.2 to 4.6, are a summary of the Appendix (see attached).

4.2. Genesis 1-2 as Normative

Following the interpretive approach of both Jesus Christ (Matthew 19 and Mark 10, on divorce) and the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2, on male-female order), we are convinced that the creation narrative in Genesis 1-2 reveals both facts about creation and paradigms for human life. The pattern established by God indicates that the appropriate counterpart for a man is a woman (and vice versa), not multiple women or another man (and vice versa), and this pattern is confirmed by Scripture as a whole.

4.3. Polygamy

The broad sweep of Scripture supports marriage as monogamous. Although polygamy is the practice of some significant biblical characters and is acknowledged as reality in Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 21:15-17), Jesus specifically indicates that the Mosaic laws about marriage were the spiritual condition of ancient Israel (Matthew 19:8), not a statement of the moral ideal. On the contrary, Jesus affirmed the creation narrative as the moral norm (Matthew 19:4-6), and the apostles of Christ affirm this norm as well (1 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Timothy 3:2).

4.4. The Heterosexual Nature of Marriage

The heterosexual nature of marriage is taught in at least two ways. First, one of the purposes of marriage is procreation to populate the earth (Genesis 1:28), and this clearly assumes a male-female union. Second, Scripture consistently rejects homosexual practice and thus rejects same-sex marriage, as summarized in paragraph 4.5.

4.5. Homosexual Practice

The sins of Sodom were much broader than homosexual activity (Ezekiel 16:49-50), but such activity was included in those sins (Jude 7). The Levitical code condemns homosexual activity (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), and although some aspects of the Levitical laws were temporary matters of ritual purity, the fact that homosexual offenders were severely punished suggests that such actions were basic moral issues and not merely matters of ritual purity. That is further demonstrated in the way that the apostle Paul treats the issue. In Romans 1:26-27 he describes homosexual acts of both men and women as examples of rebellion against the Creator and the created order. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, he describes such a lifestyle as a sign of exclusion from God's Kingdom. Finally, in 1 Timothy 1:10, he includes such activity in a list of violations of God's basic moral law.

4.6. Gender

When this policy statement refers to marriage of "one man" and "one woman", those phrases are understood to refer to persons who are biologically male and female from birth. We believe that the consistent witness of Scripture calls us to accept our biological identity as given by God. The Bible affirms that our essential identity is to be found in our relationship with God, not in our gender or sexual orientation.

4.7. Conclusion

We conclude, then, that to enter into a same-sex marriage is to commit to a sexual

union that is regarded by God as sinful. Scripture also teaches us that to act in ways that enable sin by others is itself a sinful act (Romans 14:13-15), and therefore, no Fellowship personnel at national, regional, or local levels will officiate at same-sex marriages.

5. Implications for the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Canada

5.1. Love, Dignity, and Respect

The Bible establishes that all people are to be treated with love, dignity, and respect, regardless of someone's sexual orientation, religious views, or opinions on sexual ethics. Churches should endeavour to provide people with compassion, resources, and counsel to help them live and flourish according to God's design, as revealed in Scripture.

5.2. Solemnization and Officiating

Neither MEMBER churches nor those who are credentialed and/or licensed (permanent or temporary) will arrange for, officiate at, or lead in (e.g. pray, read Scripture, provide music) the solemnization or celebration of a marriage when it does not conform to the Fellowship's *Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality*. Regions cannot issue credentials for such purposes. While there should be no involvement by credentialed and/or licensed clergy, this Policy does not preclude credentialed and/or licensed clergy from attending same-sex marriages.

5.3. Religious Views and Conscience

A MEMBER church will support their clergy's religious rights to not officiate in any marriage ceremony whatsoever where their participation would violate the clergy's religious views or conscience.

5.4. Member Church Policies

MEMBER churches are strongly encouraged to clarify through church policy the lifestyle standards that are in accord with Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* and apply such policies consistently.

5.5. Compliance with Policy

Anyone who believes or teaches contrary to the Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* shall not be recognized or affirmed as MEMBER church ministry staff, Fellowship chaplain, or Fellowship missionary, nor may they be nominated to any organizational leadership position within The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada. Likewise, any MEMBER church which believes or teaches contrary to the Fellowship's *Policy Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality* shall not be recognized or affirmed as a Fellowship MEMBER church.

6. The Appendix:

“Theology of Marriage and its Relationship to Biblical Texts”

Appendix

Theology of Marriage and Its Relationship to Biblical Texts

Introduction

1. The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches develops policies based upon its interpretation of principles discerned within the Protestant canon of the Bible. These sacred texts form for us the revealed Word of God and as His people we seek to take seriously what God has communicated. We also believe that God communicated in a special way through Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Son of God and Messiah. These sacred texts teach us that Jesus is God in every sense and so we seek to understand Jesus' words as the words of God. Today, God continues to guide us through His Spirit whom we believe to be resident in followers of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to discern the meaning and application of these sacred texts.

The Bible

2.a. The Bible is a remarkable collection of many different literary genres, including poetry, history, prophetic oracles, proverbs, speeches, parables, letters, and ethical instruction. Many common principles of interpretation apply equally to all of these genres because they are literature and amenable to literary analysis. However, it is also the case that each genre is somewhat unique and requires the application of special interpretative principles.

2.b. These documents were produced 2,000 - 3,500 years ago and the history of their production is not recoverable in every instance. Interpretation then is an exercise in cross-cultural understanding, as we seek to discern how these texts had meaning for the people for whom they were produced. Some are written in classical Hebrew, a few in Aramaic, and others in Hellenistic Greek. However, in every case translation into English or French is required for the majority of Canadians to access their content. Translation invariably involves interpretation.

2.c. As Fellowship Baptists we approach this task of biblical interpretation humbly, prayerfully, and collaboratively. We know full well that other groups who claim to be Christian interpret some of these texts quite differently than we do, but this does not absolve us of the responsibility to interpret these texts for ourselves as best we can. We listen carefully to other interpretations, but claim for ourselves the right to interpret these sacred texts based upon application of widely recognized exegetical methods and our theological tradition. For example, our understanding of Christian baptism is very different from major segments of Christianity (e.g., Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Lutheran), but we still insist that it is the correct interpretation of respective biblical texts and thus make it our practice. Historically Baptists have paid a serious price for holding to this interpretation.

Interpreting the Bible

3.a. The basic framework we employ for our interpretation of the Bible can be summarized with the expression "historical, contextual, grammatical, literary, canonical exegesis."

3.a.i. Historical - It is our understanding that the biblical texts reflect the experience of real people who lived as human beings and whose stories are now embedded in the biblical narrative in ways that represent truly the reality of their lives and actions. These are neither legend nor myth. Even in the case of the stories in Genesis 1-11, we understand their literary form to be generally the same as that found in the rest of Genesis and so regard them as historical narrative for the most part. While the language may be figurative at certain points (e.g., God being depicted as "breathing" in Genesis 2:7), the text is describing real events in human history.

We regard the stories in Genesis 2 about the creation of humans and the institution of marriage as historically true and believe this is an appropriate and defensible interpretation of these texts.

3.a.ii. Contextual - All of the texts reflect some context: that of the author and/or editor, as well as the intended audience. We are not always able to determine who the author and/or editor might be (e.g., the Book of Ruth) and similarly the original audience is often difficult to establish. Normally we are dependent upon clues in the text itself to give us some indication of both elements. Literacy was known in the Bronze Age as testified by texts from other civilizations in the Ancient Near East and we have no reason to doubt that Israel also possessed similar ability, even as their literary forms show the influence of neighbouring civilizations. For us internal and, where we can reconstruct it with some degree of confidence, external contexts are critically important for discerning the meaning of a text.

3.a.iii. Grammatical - The Bible is a collection of written texts. While they use different languages, we understand enough about these languages to decipher with a fair degree of accuracy the meaning of these texts. We also have thousands of pieces of textual evidence which makes us quite confident that we know what the authors and/or editors intended to communicate through their compositions. We interpret the texts using our best understanding of the grammatical and syntactical principles. This includes detailed semantic study of individual words and idioms. While some rare terms remain obscure in their meaning, the vast majority of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek terms used are well understood. Thus meaning is not arbitrarily discerned, but rather carefully investigated based upon well known and established linguistic principles. In the case of Hellenistic Greek, we have a vast corpus of resources outside of the New Testament that help us discern the semantic range of terms.

3.a.iv. Literary - We recognize the wide variety of genres within the Bible. An incredible amount of work by many different scholars enables us today to understand to a large degree how these various genres shape the meaning of the text, giving us clues for its proper reading. For example, we appreciate more fully Jesus' discussion with Jewish religious leaders about the question of divorce because it occurs in what is termed a "controversy story." A number of these occur in the Gospel narratives and they tend to follow a similar literary framework. They often incorporate reference to the Jewish Scriptures, which both sides use to establish the authority of their interpretation. However, it is Jesus' interpretation which the writers acknowledge and correctly expresses God's intent. While we recognize the literary nature of the text, this does not negate its historical truthfulness, i.e., that at some point in His ministry Jesus actually had a discussion with Jewish religious leaders about the issue of divorce.

3.a.v. Canonical - We also believe that the Protestant canon represents the appropriate boundary for God's revealed Word. As we read these texts, we find evidence that later writers deliberately reference earlier writings. Sometimes this is done through quotes or allusions, or sometimes by referencing people or events. In other cases the relationship is expressed by terms such as promise-fulfillment. In other words texts were written in conscious awareness of earlier material and authors intentionally linked their compositions with these earlier writings. This creates a coherence within the canon and encourages us to interpret sections of the canon in the light of other sections of the canon. The canonical context becomes an important frame of reference for our interpretation of all texts within the canon. The degree of intertextuality varies from author to author, but it is usually present.

3.a.vi. These principles of interpretation guide our investigation and understanding of texts related to marriage. We form our understanding of marriage, as God's people, based upon what we consider to be God's direction given through these texts in our Bible. We do not believe our interpretation is arbitrary or without scholarly foundation. We believe a careful and detailed study of these biblical texts will place our marriage practice firmly within the broader Christian traditions and understanding about marriage and its theological significance.

Biblical Marriage

4. Based on this approach to Scripture, we affirm that marriage is a union of one man and one woman who commit themselves through public declaration, recognized by the church and legally sanctioned by the state, to exclusive, intimate companionship and sexual union with the intention of permanence. To put it briefly, marriage is monogamous, heterosexual, and for life.

4.a. In support of this perspective, we begin at the beginning, i.e., the creation narrative of Genesis 1-2. There we find that the proper counterpart to the man is the woman created out of him and for him. God created one wife for the man, not a group of wives or another man. The creation narrative describes not only the facts of human origin, but also a paradigm for humanity. This is seen within the narrative when the text moves from description to prescription at Genesis 2:24 in stating what a man is to do when taking a wife (leave his parents and hold fast to his wife, in a committed relationship of oneness expressed in part through sexual intimacy). The paradigmatic nature of the narrative is also affirmed by Jesus in His response to questions about divorce (Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12). Although His questioners desired to ensnare Him in a controversy about reasons for divorce and the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jesus appealed to the prior principle in Genesis 2 as indicating God's ideal for humankind and the idea of a one-flesh relationship: a lifelong covenant commitment between a man and woman, established under God's mandate that ought not to be destroyed. In other words, Genesis 2 is telling us something about the way things ought to be, not just the way things were. The Mosaic Law was not designed to allow humans to distort and alter God's principles i.e. to use one part of the Scriptures to disregard another part of God's revelation (cf. the discussion about Korban in Mark 7).

4.a.i. Although Mosaic Law did not forbid polygamy, and some of the leading characters in biblical history (patriarchs and kings) had multiple wives, the broad sweep of biblical revelation indicates that the monogamy of the first humans is the norm. In Jesus' response to the questions about divorce, He indicates that divorcing a spouse and marrying another person is to commit adultery against the first spouse, then surely to marry a second spouse while married would be a sinful violation of the marital covenant (Mark 10:1-12). We also note that Jesus taught that the allowance for divorce in Mosaic Law was God's concession to the hardness of heart of the Israelites, not a statement of the moral ideal (Mark 10:1-12). One cannot, then, treat the particulars of Mosaic Law or the mere facts of marriage in biblical history as the moral norm. Apostolic teaching about marriage in general (1 Corinthians 7) and moral requirements for church leaders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1) extend Jesus' affirmation of radical commitment to monogamy.

Homosexuality and the Bible

4.b. The heterosexual nature of marriage is revealed in Scripture in two ways.

First, in the creation narrative (Genesis 1:28) God commands the man and woman to produce offspring. However, we have to wait until Genesis 2:23-25 to discover that God mandates marriage and He intends human reproduction to occur in the context of this marital relationship. This clearly assumes a sexual union of a man and a woman.

Second, there is throughout the biblical canon a consistent rejection of homosexual practice as an immoral violation of God's created order. We recognize that others within the wider Church argue that the witness of these biblical texts should not be read as a timeless and trans-cultural norm, but we affirm the historic understanding of the Church and reject this revisionist approach to the biblical texts. There is no trajectory or positive movement within Scripture that would suggest a change in perspective within the developing biblical documents.

Homosexuality and the Old Testament

4.b.i. The place to begin is again at the beginning, the creation paradigm. The

appropriate partner for the man is the woman, creating a union of two who are equally the image of God but who are not equivalent and who are designed specifically by God to suit and assist one another via their respective gender distinctiveness.

4.b.ii. The story of Sodom (Genesis 19) is obviously significant in the history of this debate. Many have rightly noted that the sins for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed were not simply sexual sins. The prophet Ezekiel (16:49-50), in fact, begins his description of Sodom's guilt by referring to their materialism and callous disregard for the poor and needy, but we note that he also describes their sin as inclusive of "detestable things," a term used in Mosaic Law to describe homosexual sin (Leviticus 18:22). In Ezekiel 16:23-48 Yahweh continually accuses Israel of prostitution and then names this as something "more detestable" (vv.50-51) than the "detestable thing" that the inhabitants of Sodom did. We also note that in the New Testament, Jude 7 ("they indulged in illicit sexual relations and went after 'another kind of flesh'") refers to the sin of Sodom as inclusive of sexual immorality, and the connection to the attitudes described in Genesis 19 is obvious. The sin of Sodom was broader than sexual immorality, but it was not less than that. The verb in LXX Genesis 19:5 is (in Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint) use the same definition (volume 2, p. 444). Wevers (Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis) 4.b.iii. In the laws about sexual purity contained in Mosaic legislation, sexual relations between two men are explicitly condemned (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Although there is no Levitical text that directly addresses sexual relations between two females, the generally androcentric nature of ancient Israel would suggest that the laws about men would implicitly apply to women as well. We recognize that Mosaic Law had a limited purpose of guiding Israel until the arrival of Messiah, and now that Messiah has come and inaugurated the new covenant, we cannot simply apply every Mosaic restriction directly (see Galatians 3:15-29). But it is generally recognized that while some Levitical laws and the statements of New Testament authors indicate that they assumed a timeless and trans-cultural prohibition of homosexual practice. One indication that the prohibition of homosexual relations is a basic moral issue is the fact that the punishment for it is the same as that for adultery (Leviticus 20:10, nstrual period (Leviticus 18:19), the punishment for violation of the law is merely exclusion from the community (Leviticus 1 20:18). Therefore, we conclude that homosexual practice is, like adultery (Leviticus 20:10), a matter of basic morality, not merely a matter of ritual purity. Homosexuality and the New Testament 4.b.iv. The most significant New Testament text is probably Romans 1:26-27, read in the wider context of 1:18-32. This text regards homosexual practice of both males (men interacting sexually with men) and females as one manifestation of creaturely rebellion against the general revelation of God through the created order. The revisionist reading of the text suggests that what is in view here is merely promiscuous or exploitative sex, but that ignores the fact that the inner logic of the text is that the activity is a rejection of the natural connection to the opposite sex. If the issue were pederasty or master-slave exploitation, that could be easily explained, but that is not the case here (and these activities would still be forms of homosexual practice even though today we use different terms). Some have argued that Paul would not have been aware of loving same-sex relationships like some of the ones in question today, but Paul was a well-traveled citizen of the Roman world, and there is evidence to indicate that the range of attitudes toward homosexual activity was not that different from the modern western world. [See, for example, Thomas K. Hubbard, ed. *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (University of California Press, 2003); and William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Eerdmans, 2012).] 4.b.v. The apostle Paul refers to homosexual acts in two other places: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:10. In 1 Corinthians, he uses two terms (*malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*) to describe the persons in view, the former apparently denoting the passive partner in male homosexual acts, and the latter a more general term derived from the language of the

Levitical laws in the Septuagint. The term is compound, describing men who go to bed with men, and is repeated in the second text. In 1 Corinthians, the terms describe one category of persons who will not inherit the kingdom of God, and they stand alongside other terms denoting basic moral evil. In 1 Timothy, the term occurs in a list of violations of the Decalogue, in other words, violations of basic moral law. Conclusion 5.a. For all the reasons above, we believe that same-sex marriage is rebellion against the order of creation established by God, consistently understood in Scripture to be a violation of moral law. To enter into such a marriage is thus a sinful act, and to facilitate a marriage between two males or two females requires our spiritual leaders to participate in sinful, moral rebellion which is a violation of their conscience and religious freedom. Therefore, Fellowship personnel at national, regional, or local levels will not facilitate or participate in rituals that solemnize homosexual relationships. phrases are understood to refer to persons who are biologically male and female from birth. Although Scripture does not address contemporary debates about gender identity directly, we believe that the consistent witness of Scripture calls us to accept our biological identity as given by God. The Bible affirms in many different ways that our essential identity is to be found in our relationship with God, not in our gender or sexual orientation. The creation account, in fact, emphasizes that God created Various biblical texts speak negatively of any attempt to portray oneself as the opposite sex (Deuteronomy 22:5) or to reject standard cultural symbols of maleness and femaleness (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). In the Romans 1 text noted above, Paul 1 His created order for male and female. We are aware of the reality of gender dysphoria, and we desire to deal compassionately with the persons involved, but we do not believe that such compassion 5.c. The Bible knows no other gender categories besides male and female. We are one or the other. We are neither identical nor interchangeable (Genesis 1:27, 2:18-22). Sex is determined at conception and observed at birth by our visible biological differences. Clarity can be achieved when needed by looking at chromosomes or internal physiology. The Bible teaches and operates with the binary categories of man and woman. However, we recognize rare hormonal variations mean the biological sex of the person is neither distinctly male or female. 5.d. The Bible teaches the unity of biological sex and gender identity. There is no confusion between the two in the Bible. There may be those who women, but believe that who God created them to be does not correspond with their biological sex and only by living the opposite sex can they fully embrace their true self. The Bible rejects this type of thinking. Our desires or our emotional or mental state do not equal nor supersede renewed in our mind (Romans 12:2), and no longer walking as we once did (Ephesians 4:17-18). The Bible teaches that men and women should not act sexually as the opposite sex (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-10), nor should men dress like a woman or woman like a man (Deuteronomy 22:5), for it is not God honouring to live out other-gendered expressions of identity (I Corinthians 11:14-15). Followers of Christ belong to God and we are commanded to glorify God with our bodies (I Corinthians 6:19-20).