



HELPS

FOR

PASTORAL MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION

The Helps for Pastoral Ministry has been compiled to assist FEC pastors in the planning and performing of ministerial duties. The contents are a collection of ministry resources from a variety of places. These are to be seen as suggestive and creative, but not as conclusive or exhaustive. Someone has said, "Methods change, but the message remains the same." These contents are about methods.

It is the hope of the committee that each pastor will find these resources to be stimulating and helpful, but that he would also supplement this material from his personal collection and from his continuous reading.

The committee gratefully acknowledges the input of FEC pastors and congregations who have shared ideas, some of which are included in these helps.

All scripture references come from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

When Manual is used, it refers to the FEC Manual of Faith, Practice and Organization.

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I. ORDINANCES

A. Baptism

1. Class Instruction on Baptism

At least one class is recommended for the baptismal candidates to understand and appreciate the purpose and meaning of believer's baptism. The class instruction on baptism is sometimes combined with preparation for membership in the church. In either case, it is important that the pastor keep a clear distinction among salvation, baptism and church membership.

This class could include these 11 questions about baptism.

a. What is an ordinance?

It is an outward ceremony symbolic of a spiritual truth or experience which was instituted by Christ for perpetual use by the church. The two most universally accepted ordinances are the Lord's Supper and baptism. An ordinance is a symbol of a biblical truth having to do with salvation and the work of redemption.

b. What does baptism symbolize?

It symbolizes the total work of redemption-Christ's death, burial and resurrection.

c. Who should be baptized?

Only those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

d. Why be baptized?

Because Christ commanded it - Matthew 28:19

Because it publicly identifies the believer with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection - 1 John 2:3-4 and Colossians 2:12.

Because it is considered the door into the visible local church. It seems the early church considered it essential to membership (Acts 2:41). There is no indication that anyone joined the early church without baptism.

Because it can become a source of significant spiritual inspiration and strength as one is obedient to the Lord's command.

e. When should someone be baptized?

The Bible sets no specific time for baptism. However, from what we read in Scripture, water baptism closely followed the conversion experience - Acts 2:41, 8:35-39, 9:17-18, 10:44-48.

f. In what manner should one be baptized?

We encourage immersion because this form of baptism clearly symbolizes its spiritual significance. However, other modes of believer's baptism are recognized.

g. Should children be baptized?

There is little evidence in the Bible for infant baptism. There is no case clearly recorded in scripture where a child is baptized. The very meaning of baptism seems to forbid it (See c above.)

h. Is baptism essential to salvation?

No! The thief on the cross had no opportunity to be baptized, but Jesus said he would be with him in paradise.

i. Why baptize "in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit?"

Matthew 28:18-19

Because God is the source of our salvation.
Because Jesus is the channel of our salvation.
Because the Holy Spirit is the agent of our salvation.

j. Should one ever be re-baptized?

Only if he/she was a non-Christian when baptized. Baptism apart from belief has no significance to God. Acts 19:1-5.

k. What about Acts 2:38? Doesn't that teach baptismal regeneration?

"...be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins"

It is against the whole of biblical teaching to suppose that the outward rite of baptism had any value except insofar as it was accompanied by true repentance within. Peter in Acts 3:19 shows that what brings remission of sins is not water baptism but *repentance and conversion*.

The question is this: What relationship does baptism have with the forgiveness of sin and salvation? The answer is partially found in the way the preposition "for" is used in the phrase "for (eis) the forgiveness of your sins." The preposition in New Testament Greek can have a number of meanings: (1) aim or purpose, (2) because of or on the grounds of. (A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, Dana and Mantey, pp. 103-105, # 7). The former meaning would imply that baptism is a means to the forgiveness of sins, while the latter carries the idea that baptism comes as the result.

2. Application for Believer's Baptism

The application can be a beginning point to get candidates to think about their qualifications and readiness for believer's baptism. An application may be prepared by the pastor, in connection with other leadership, and given upon request. Such an application could include questions as follows:

- a. Describe your Christian conversion.
- b. Do you believe you have truly repented of your sins? What does that mean to you?
- c. Has Christ become your personal Savior and Lord? What does that mean to you?

- d. After reading Romans 10:9-10, what does it mean to confess Christ as Lord? Have you done this in another person's hearing? Are you willing to confess Christ in front of your church family?
- e. Is it your purpose now to follow Christ for the rest of your life?
- f. How do you plan to accomplish that purpose?
- g. What evidence has there been in your life that your conversion has been genuine and lasting?
- h. Please look up the following passages to familiarize yourself with the meaning and purpose behind believer's baptism:

Romans 6:3-4
1 Peter 3:21

Titus 3:5
Acts 8:35-40

3. Procedures for Believer's Baptism

It is wise to meet with candidates previous to the service to explain how the baptism will be performed, when they will share a testimony or verse, etc. If it is by immersion, they will need to bring a change of clothes, and to be told when and where they are to change.

One approach may be to have the candidate answer the following questions standing before the congregation: (Manual, p. 66)

- a. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
- b. Do you believe you have forgiveness for all your sins through faith in Christ?
- c. Do you commit yourself to a life of loving obedience under the lordship of Christ?
- d. Will you seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ?

At the time of the baptism, the pastor might say something like: "Upon your confession of faith in Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Following the baptism, a baptism certificate should be presented to each one baptized. Those who have been baptized may be greeted by the congregation for encouragement.

B. The Lord's Supper

1. General Ideas

a. Theology

See Manual, page 25 for a presentation of the theology of the Lord's Supper.

b. Frequency

As churches renew interest in the Lord's Supper and its significance, the frequency of practice tends to increase. Some churches find that quarterly and even monthly celebrations of the Lord's Supper help to keep the church focused on the primacy of the redemptive work of Christ.

c. Resource for Understanding and Celebrating the Lord's Supper

2. Sample Sermon Outlines

a. Title: *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*

Scripture: 1 Cor. 11:23-29

Idea: The believer's responsibility in communion

1. We do it to remember
2. We do it to proclaim the Lord's death
3. We do it to examine our lives

b. Title: The Meaning of Communion

Scripture: 1 Cor. 11:24-25; Matt. 26:26

Idea: Questions to be answered - What do the bread and cup mean? What do these simple elements say to the human heart?

1. Remember and take hope
2. Believe and receive
3. Come and be one

c. Title: Reflections on the Lord's Supper

Scripture: 1 Cor. 11:23-29

Idea: The Lord's Supper as the church's worship

1. Something complete is given to us
2. Something complete is given by us
3. Something complete is given through us

d. Title: The Memorial of Remembrance

Scripture: 1 Cor. 11:23-29

Idea: Remember what Christ has done

1. Remember what Christ has done for us
2. Remember what Christ has done in us

3. Music Resources

a. Traditional Hymns:

Alas, and Did My Saviour Bleed?

At the Cross

Be Thou My Vision

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Break Thou the Bread of Life

Breathe on My Breath of God

He Died for Me

I Saw One Hanging on a Tree

Just As I Am

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Speak, Lord, in the Stillness

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

- b. Praise Songs:
 - O the Blood of Jesus
 - I Exalt Thee
 - More Precious Than Silver
 - Jesus Remember Me
 - Gloria, Gloria, Gloria
 - We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise
 - Abba, Father
 - Worthy Is the Lamb
 - Jesus is Lord, Alleluia
 - Broken for Me

II. MEMBERSHIP

A. Instruction for Membership

It is advisable to have instruction in preparation for membership. An example for such a class is given here.

1. Lesson One: How FEC Came to Be

a. The Church is Born

- Pentecost
- New Testament Spread and Development
 - Acts 2-12: Jerusalem and Judea
 - Acts 13-28: Missionary outreach
- Conversion of Emperor Constantine
- Roman Supremacy

b. The Church Reformed

- Luther (1517)
- Zwingli (1519)
- Anabaptists (1525)
 - Origin
 - Menno Simons
 - Migrations to America
- Henry Egly (1865)

c. FEC

- Formation of congregations by evangelism, migration and church extension
- The Missionary Church schism (1898)
- Conference organization
- Salem Children's Home
- Miracle Camp
- Christian Service Foundation
- The local church
- Resource: *You Must Be Born Again*, Stan Nussbaum

2. Lesson Two: Our Salvation

a. Becoming a Christian

- Why this is important, Romans 3:23
- God's provision for salvation, John 3:16, 14:6
- God wants you to be saved, 1 Timothy 2:3-4
- Repentance/confession, Acts 2:37-38; 1 John 1:9
- Receiving Christ, John 1:12-13; Revelation 3:20
- Confess Christ, Romans 10:9-10

b. Meaning of Terms

- New Birth, John 3
- Adoption, Romans 8:15
- Grafting, Romans 11:17-24
- Justification, Romans 5:1

c. Assurance of Salvation

- You can know, 1 John 5:13
- FEC Manual, p. 19

3. Lesson Three: The Christian Life/Our Discipleship

a. Devotional Life

- Personal, 2 Peter 3:18
Devotional helps
Bible reading and prayer
- Church, Hebrews 10:25
The Lord's Day: Why Sunday instead of Saturday?
Teachings received
Worship

b. Stewardship of Life, Romans 12:1-2

- Time
- Talent
- Money
- Witness

c. The New Way

- Separation from sin, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Romans 6:11-13
- Devotion to Christ, Mark 8:34-38
- Service to others, Mark 10:45

4. Lesson Four: The Ordinances and Church Membership

a. Baptism

- Meaning
 - Symbolic of cleansing, Titus 3:5
 - Identification with Christ, Romans 6:304
 - Conscience response, 1 Peter 3:21

- Modes and their symbolism
 - Sprinkling: Old Testament figures of cleansing
 - Pouring: washing clean
 - Immersion: new life

- Requirements for baptism
 - Testimony of conversion (repentance and faith)
 - Testimony of purpose to follow Christ
 - Evidence of new life, Matthew 7:20

b. The Lord's Supper

- Instituted by Christ, Mark 14:22-24
- Purpose, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25
- A confession of faith, 1 Corinthians 11:26
- Practice of open communion

c. Church Membership

- Requirements
 - Testimony to conversion
 - Believers baptism
 - Sign the church covenant
 - Approval by membership committee

- Responsibilities
 - Loyalty to Christ and the church
 - Participation in life and work of the church
 - Support by faithful giving

- Rights
 - Vote and participate in other business
 - Hold office

B. Application for Membership

The following is an example of a membership application used in one of the FEC Churches.

Application for Church Membership

Name in full _____ Birth Date _____

Married to Whom _____ Date of Marriage _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Do you believe that you are a sinner and need God's grace for the forgiveness of your sins? _____

Do you believe that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ, God's Son, who gave his life on the cross to pay the penalty for all your sins? _____

Do you know that by confession of your sins and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that you have received forgiveness and eternal life? _____

How long have you been a Christian? _____

Have you been baptized since you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord? _____ If you have, in what church and where? _____

Note: Believer's baptism is required for membership in the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

If your answer was "no," are you now willing to be baptized? _____

Are you now a member of a church? _____ If so, please provide the church's name and address

Have you read the FEC Manual of Faith, Practice and Organization? _____

Do you agree with the statement of faith contained therein? _____

Do you have any disagreements with the teachings contained in the FEC Manual? _____ If so, please explain _____

Have you been divorced? _____ You may comment on this if desired

Do you have any personal habits, practices or associations which might hinder your Christian walk and service or your fellowship in this church body? _____ If so, please explain

Do you have association with any secret organization, such as the Masonic Lodge? _____ (Manual, p. 30)

Do you understand that membership implies loyalty to Jesus Christ and this church, which is a part of his body, and involves endeavoring to maintain unity and purity in the church, striving to be temperate in all things, seeking to be a positive witness in all relationships, being active in Christian service according to spiritual gifts, maintaining regular church attendance, contributing generously to the church's ministry and being subject to its discipline? _____

Signed _____ Date _____

C. Receiving New Members

After candidates for membership receive proper instruction about the responsibilities and privileges of church membership, approved by the responsible committee or board, they should be received in a public

service of the church. After the pastor calls the candidates forward, they should respond to the following questions: (Manual, p. 50)

1. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as your only savior from sin?
2. Do you have the witness of the Spirit that you have been born again and that you are now a child of God?
3. Have you been baptized since you first trusted in Christ?
4. Are you in agreement with the articles of faith and practice of this church?
5. Will you joyfully support this church with your time, gifts and your prayers?

After the candidate answers the questions, it is appropriate for the pastor to have a brief prayer for the new members, followed by an appropriate greeting and the giving of a membership certificate. Beyond this, it may be advisable for the pastor to invite the congregation to extend the hand of fellowship to the new members after the service.

D. Church Discipline

The following is for consideration and help when a church is determining its own policy guidelines.

1. The Command for Church Discipline

The Bible teaches that the church should exercise discipline (Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Galatians 6:1, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15).

It is the responsibility of the spiritual leadership of the church to guide the church on matters of church discipline.

2. The Purpose of Church Discipline

- a. To show obedience to the word of God 1 John 2:3-6
- b. To protect the church from sin 1 Corinthians 5:6
- c. To save and restore a sinning member 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 5:5
- d. To bring glory to Christ 1 Corinthians 6:15

3. Sins Requiring Discipline

We must be careful not to set up our own catalog of sins. The Bible mentions certain sins. The fact that others are not mentioned specifically does not mean they are not bases for discipline.

- a. Gross sin (so-called) 1 Corinthians 5:11-13
- b. Disorderly conduct 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14

c. Problems among members 1 Corinthians 6:5-6

4. Procedures in Church Discipline

- a. Take a biblical approach
- b. Conduct a complete investigation
- c. Take action
- d. Begin the restoration process

5. Degrees of Church Discipline

- a. Private admonition 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thessalonians 3:15
- b. Public censure 1 Timothy 5:20
- c. Social ostracism 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; 1 Corinthians 5:11
- d. Church excommunication 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, cf. vs. 13

All of this is to be done through the leading of God's Spirit revealing the Word of God.

Compare to Manual, p. 53.

III. SERVICES

A. Dedication of Children

The following presupposes that there has been an interview or a counseling session with the parents to be involved in order to discuss the meaning and purpose of public child dedication, as well as the procedure to be used. Such an act is meaningless, or even a violation of propriety, unless there is active Christian example and purpose on the part of the parents.

The suggested procedure below anticipates 10 to 15 minutes. Such a public act includes instructions for both the parents and the congregation in general.

1. Scripture Reading

The pastor may select one or more of these passages: Deut. 6:5-7, Mark 10:13-16, Psalm 103:17-18.

2. General Comments

We have this commandment from God--that we should diligently raise our children in the faith according to the teaching of the scriptures. In keeping with this command, parents bring their little ones to present them in a public act of dedication to the Lord.

The precedent for child dedication can be found in the Bible as is seen in the presentation of little Samuel by his mother in 1 Samuel 1:28. In her prayer of dedication, Hannah said, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord." Another example is that of Jesus' presentation by Joseph and Mary in the temple. The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that from a child he had known the scriptures in his home. Jesus considered the little children as very precious and said, "Let them come unto me and don't hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

The purpose of child dedication is to be found in the purpose of the parents. Rightly understood, the ceremony is one of dedication of the parents themselves. By the act of dedication they give public recognition to God's sovereignty over both themselves and their children. It also signifies their parental responsibility to God and their children.

(As previously planned with them, invite the parents and their children to the front.)

3. To the Parents

By this public act today, you are pledging yourselves to obey the command of scripture to bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4) The Living Bible puts it this way, "Bring them up with the loving disciplines the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice." This ceremony is devoid of meaning unless you dedicate yourselves, as well as your children, to God. By presenting your children you are signifying both your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and your desire that they may personally know and follow the will of God.

Do you solemnly promise before God and this congregation that you will by example and instruction seek to lead the children you are presenting today in the way of the Lord, making use of the many helps the Lord gives you in the home and the church? By these they will be helped to early desire to love God and be of service to the Lord Jesus Christ. If this is your purpose, you may respond, "This is my commitment, God being my helper."

(The pastor may then take each child in his arms, or just place a hand on each one, call each child by name and speak to him/her.)

_____ Name, your parents have brought you here today to publicly dedicate you to the Lord. So now we dedicate you to God in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May the blessing of God be upon you, the love of Christ always encircle you, and the presence of the Holy Spirit accompany you all through your life. Amen.

4. Church Family Response

As your Christian family, we thank God for your children. By word and example we shall seek to support your parental role of providing a loving home where trust in God may grow, and a church where training and worship are provided. We pray that our lives and witness will help make your task joyful and fruitful.

5. Pastor's Prayer

B. Weddings

The wedding is a very significant event in the life of a man and woman. Their expression of love and life-long commitment to each other fulfills the creative pattern found in Genesis 2. Paul uses the marriage relationship as typifying the relationship of Christ and the church

(Ephesians 5) Therefore, it is important that the whole service, including the reception and program afterwards, brings glory to God (Colossians 3:17). It is understood that the wedding of two unbelievers will miss some of the content expected in a Christian wedding.

I. Preparations for the Wedding

a. Public preaching and teaching on marriage

Many couples would be spared a lot of heartbreak if the pastor would preach more on this subject. In light of society's moral laxity and marital infidelity this need is more urgent than ever.

b. Acquaintance with the laws of the state

The pastor should know about matters such as age requirements, health demands and physical examinations, waiting periods, need for being registered with the state, etc.

c. Pre-wedding guidelines

It is helpful for the congregation and couple to know what is expected by the pastor of their church to participate in a marriage. An example of such a marriage policy is included in the Appendix and adapted to the desires of the pastor and church leadership. Periodically this policy should be made public so the church constituency becomes familiar with it.

-Once the wedding has been confirmed by the pastor, several matters should be given attention.

Counseling sessions should be arranged. The content of these sessions will be designed by the pastor. He may prepare the complete agenda or choose to include available tools like personality tests, pre-marriage inventories, etc. to supplement the counseling process. Use of these tools, along with any personally prepared questionnaire, may become the primary basis for discussion and counsel. An example of a premarital counseling questionnaire is included on page 21.

The couple may be given an information sheet to guide them planning details and to be returned for a permanent record of their wedding. An example is on page 25.

The couple should be informed about the responsible use of the church facilities and about the wedding practices in the church. An example is on page 27.

Each pastor and church should design their own guidelines to fit their own tradition, facilities and desires. In non-essentials there should be sufficient flexibility in using these to allow for unforeseen circumstances, but adequate firmness to communicate their seriousness and value. Harmony, orderliness and good feelings all come as the result of clear communication and mutual understanding.

The pastor should allow the couple to take the initiative in planning the wedding ceremony. However, he must stay adequately informed about the details, provide suggestions and insights and maintain the right to exclude whatever does not seem fitting in a Christian wedding. It will be helpful for the couple and pastor to walk through the ceremony in the sanctuary before the rehearsal so that each one has a good concept of details in the order of things.

The wedding rehearsal is an essential exercise for the orderly carrying out of the ceremony and for the confidence and comfort of all involved. If possible, all participants should be present so sufficient information can be given and adequate practice experienced. The desires of the couple should be

honored by all, and the pastor should provide sufficient leadership to see that it happens. The party should be informed that the beauty, orderliness and glory of the Lord has top priority. At least two walk-throughs of the ceremony with all the party is generally necessary. It is helpful if each member of the party is given an outline of the order of the ceremony to assist them in remembering the details for which they are responsible. Give attention to enough details so that all feel comfortable about their roles, but endeavor to keep the rehearsal moving so the party does not become bored, restless and inattentive.

2. Properties of the Wedding Ceremony

a. Form and practice

Traditional and contemporary ways of entry, standing and procedures can be found in books on wedding etiquette available at most bookstores. Because many of these do not always agree on what is proper, the couple has a great deal of freedom to exercise their preference under the pastor's guidance.

b. Content

There is no exact order of standard content for the wedding ceremony. Some of the essential and optional ingredients could include the following (not necessarily in this order):

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Prelude | Ring vows |
| Processional | Candle lighting ceremony |
| Welcome to guests | Prayer of dedication |
| Invocational prayer | Kiss |
| Special music | Declaration of marriage |
| Congregational hymn | Presentation of couple |
| Parental affirmation or response | Benedictory prayer |
| Meditation | Recessional |
| Vows of marriage | |

Many minister's handbooks will contain complete sample outlines and content of wedding ceremonies. From these, the pastor can gain ideas and help in the formation of a basic ceremony that satisfies himself and also provides sufficient flexibility or variety to fit the desires of each couple.

c. Vows

There are a variety of vows available. The pastor may want to have a list of acceptable ones from which a couple may choose. Examples of marriage and ring vows are on page 29.

Some couples prefer to write their own vows. In such cases, the pastor should maintain the right to give approval in order to avoid what is too trite or sentimental. Attention should always be given to ensure that essentials of the marriage vows are included. Any vows should include a commitment to love and a commitment to each other for life.

3. Post-wedding matters

a. Give a signed certificate to the couple. This is more important than often realized. It is the only proof that the couple has been married until the record is filed at the courthouse.

- b. Sign and send the provided certificate to the courthouse. The law specifies the time limit for this.
- c. Visit in the new home as soon as is convenient. Encourage the couple to attend the church they had agreed upon before the marriage.

4. An Example of a Marriage Policy

"What God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:6).

Marriage is holy, ordained of God, and regulated by his holy word. We desire to help couples prepare for a God-centered marriage. Therefore, the following marriage policy applies to weddings that are performed at this church.

- a. A couple is encouraged to contact one of the pastors at least six months before the anticipated wedding date and not less than four months before. If a couple is living together, they will be expected to live separately until after counseling and the consummation of the marriage.
- b. The couple must attend a minimum of four counseling sessions. Personality testing and a family inventory will be administered. The biblical view of marriage and divorce will be discussed. Homework will be required and must be completed before each counseling session. A wedding date will not be confirmed until the second session.
- c. If either person has been divorced, a divorce recovery program and a minimum of six pre-marital counseling sessions will be required.
- d. It is highly recommended that the couple have complete pre-marital physical examinations, including blood testing that screens for sexually transmitted diseases.
- e. At least two post-marital counseling sessions are required-one at six months and one at twelve months.
- f. We encourage all married couples to attend marriage enrichment classes or seminars.
- g. We encourage married couples, when faced with marital difficulties, to seek help from a Christian couple, pastor, or Christian counselor before differences become too large to resolve.

5. An Example of a Premarital Counseling Questionnaire

His Name _____

Her Name _____

General Subjects

- a. Name two characteristics which you admire in your mate.
- b. Name two characteristics or weaknesses which you least appreciate in your mate.
- c. Are you well acquainted with your mate's immediate family?
Describe your relationship with them.

d. Give five reasons for wanting to marry your mate:

-
-
-
-
-

e. How long have you known each other?

f. How long have you been engaged?

g. Does your family completely approve of your choice of a mate?

Father -

Mother -

h. What would you consider grounds for divorce?

i. Is there anything which makes you jealous of your mate?

j. What are your goals or aims in life? Have you discussed these with your mate?

k. What is your opinion of household duties?

l. What is your level of education completed?

Social

a. What are two activities (recreation, social, etc.) which you have in common?

b. Do you dislike any of your mate's family or friends?

c. Should each of you be permitted one night a week for your own interests?

d. Do you think that certain dates (anniversary, birthday, etc.) should be remembered by your mate?

Family and Home

a. Has divorce occurred in your family?

b. Do you plan to live with your family or your mate's family?

c. What is your thinking regarding the matter of "in-laws?"

d. How many children would you like to have?

- e. Who is to be the head of your home?
- f. What is your plan for settling family problems?
- g. Who is to exercise the discipline of children?
- h. Should your mate ever keep anything a secret from you? If so, what?
- i. Is the wife in this family going to work?

Religion

- a. Have you entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
- b. How do you know that you are a child of God, having received Jesus Christ as your own Savior?
- c. Are your parents Christians?
- d. Can you honestly say that you believe that your mate is a Christian?
- e. Do you believe his/her parents are Christians?
- f. Do you plan to have prayer and Bible reading together?
- g. Do you need some direction or help in this matter?
- h. How often do you attend church?
- i. What church do you attend and are you a member?

Finances

- a. How much money do you think you will need to operate your household?
- b. Does your wife or husband plan to work?
- c. How much money should your mate have for personal expenses jewelry, athletics, etc.)?
- d. How often should a family eat out?
- e. What part of your family income should be given to the Lord?
- f. Do you plan to buy or rent a dwelling?
- g. What is your opinion of buying on credit?
- h. Which of you is going to handle the money and payment of bills?
- i. How much money should be spent on recreational activities?

j. Have you planned any kind of a budget?

An insurance program?

k. If she does work and becomes pregnant, how will the family adjust to the lower income?

Sex

a. What books have you read on the matter of sex in marriage?

b. Do you think your knowledge of sexual and physical relations is excellent good fair poor? (Circle 1)

c. Do you think sex is very important in marriage?

For your mate?

For yourself?

d. Are you currently engaging in premarital sex?

e. Have you ever had sexual intercourse with anyone?

f. Do you think your mate is sexually adjusted and ready for marriage?

List three reasons for your answer:

-
-
-

6. An Example of Wedding Plan Questionnaire

Calendar

Rehearsal: Date _____ Hour _____

Place _____

Wedding: Date _____ Hour _____

Place _____

Groom

Name _____ Residence _____

Birth Date _____ Birthplace _____

Occupation _____ Race _____

Name of parents _____ Phone _____

Previous marital status:

Never married ___ Divorced ___ Widower _____

Bride

Name _____ Residence _____

Birth Date _____ Birthplace _____

Occupation _____ Race _____

Name of parents _____ Phone _____

Previous marital status:

Never married ___ Divorced ___ Widower _____

Attendants

Maid or Matron of Honor _____

Bride's Attendants

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Best Man _____

Groom's Attendants

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Ushers

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Ring Bearer _____ Flower Girl _____

Organist _____ Soloist _____

Pianist _____

Order of Music

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Florist _____ Photographer _____

Ceremony Details

Place _____ Double or Single Ring _____

Bride given away? _____ By whom? _____

Candlelight? _____ Candle Lighters _____

Reception

Where _____ How many guests? _____

Hostess(es) _____

Cutting Cake _____ Pouring _____

Guest Book _____ Gift Table _____

7. An Example of a Church Wedding Policy

This church wants to give the best possible service to its members and friends. You are welcome to the use of our facilities. The wedding ceremony is one of the most sacred rites of the church. It is the desire of the pastor and the church family to make every such ceremony a beautiful and worshipful experience. We extend to each wedding party every possible courtesy and assistance.

In order to maintain a mutual and satisfactory understanding, the following outlined procedures have been adopted.

a. Rooms and Furniture

The rooms and furniture of the church are all available for use. The only condition for this privilege is that every room be left as it was found and that everything be returned to the place from which it was taken. Any damage incurred in the use of the facilities is the responsibility of the bride and groom or their parents.

The family is responsible to return things to their original place and see that the facility is cleaned up under the guidance of the custodian. The custodian should be contacted beforehand by the family for mutual understanding of the time when the family will be present to do the work. A small honorarium would be an appropriate token of appreciation for the custodian's extra labor.

b. Pastor

The pastor shall officiate at all marriages in the church unless there are valid reasons for exception and other arrangements are made in cooperation with the pastor.

The bride and groom shall contact the pastor before the announcements are made or invitations printed. The pastor has the prerogative to choose not to perform any marriage which he, in good conscience, feels may violate scriptural, denominational, and personal principles.

Several premarital counseling sessions shall be arranged with the pastor. These will include discussion of many areas of marriage relationships and a thorough planning of the wedding ceremony and service.

c. Music

Music used in the ceremony should be in keeping with the sacredness and dignity of the wedding service. Anything which may be questionable as to association, nature, or content should be discussed with the pastor. The bride and groom may choose their own musicians who should be of good character and adequate competence.

d. Photographs

Photographs demanding the use of flash bulbs may not be taken during the ceremony proper. Pictures may be taken during the processional and recessional. After the recessional the wedding party may return for as many pictures as desired.

e. Floral Decorations

Flowers used must be in clean, rust-free, lead-proof containers. The candelabra, candle lighters, kneeling bench, and aisle carpet (if used) may be obtained from the florist.

Dripless candles are preferred to prevent drippings on the floor. Should any other type be used, a protective covering under the candelabra is required.

f. Rice and Confetti

Rice and confetti throwing is to be done outside the building, never on the inside.

g. Rehearsal Dinners and Receptions

Rehearsal dinners and receptions may be held in the fellowship hall. All the equipment in the kitchen along with chairs and tables in the fellowship hall may be used under the condition that everything is cleaned up and put back into place.

All members of the wedding party will refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages immediately preceding both the rehearsal and the wedding. No alcoholic beverages are to be served at the rehearsal

dinner or the reception. There is to be no smoking in the church building. The bride and groom or their families shall be responsible to see that these guidelines are followed.

h. Appearance and Conduct

It is expected that the personal appearance, dress, cleanliness and conduct of all members of the party will be in keeping with the normal expressions of good taste, the nature of the service, and the house where God is worshiped.

8. Examples of Marriage Vows

"I, _____, take you _____, to be my wedded husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith."

(groom) "_____, I love you and take you today for my wife. I will honor you for who you are now and what we will become together. I promise to love you and lead you as Christ does His body, the church. I promise to support you in good times as well as through the trials that God allows to come our way. I rejoice in Christ that we have found each other and affirm to you my love and faithfulness as long as we both shall live."

(bride) "_____, I love you and it's because of this love that I want to share the rest of my life with you. I am anxiously anticipating the future God has for us and promise to love you and stand by you as leader of our home in sickness and in health, through failure and success. I also rejoice in Christ that we have found each other and look forward to our responsibility of establishing a home where Christ is the center. I affirm to you my love and faithfulness as long as we both shall live."

(groom) "_____, today I promise and covenant before God and these friends to be your loving and faithful husband. I promise to provide for your needs, encouraging you to become all that God intended you to be. Together we want to grow in Christ. I accept you as my wife and promise to stay by your side regardless of what the circumstances may bring. I forsake all others and keep myself only for you and together we will serve the Lord until He parts us by death."

(bride) "_____, today I promise and covenant before God and these friends to be your loving and faithful wife. I promise by God's grace to be a true companion for you and accept your leadership. I accept you as my husband and promise to stay by your side regardless of what the circumstances may bring. I forsake all others and keep myself only for you and together we will serve the Lord until He parts us by death."

(groom) "_____, I take you to be my wife, to live with you according to God's plan in the holy bond of marriage. I solemnly promise to faithfully fulfill my responsibilities as your Christian husband, to protect, honor, love and cherish you in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or in health and to keep myself unto you alone as long as we both shall live."

(bride) "_____, I take you to be my husband, to live with you according to God's plan in the holy bond of marriage. I solemnly promise to faithfully fulfill my responsibilities as your Christian wife and to be a tender, loving, true and helpful wife, whether circumstances are easy or difficult, in sickness or in health, and to keep myself unto you alone as long as we both shall live."

(groom) "I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to live together according to the Word of God. I will love you, cherish you, assist and support you in all the labors of life, and keep myself to you only as long as we both shall live."

(bride) "I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to live together according to the Word of God. I will love you, reverence you with due submission, will be a helpmate to you, and keep myself to you only as long as we both shall live."

9. Examples of Rings Vows

"I give this ring to you as a constant reminder of the vows I have taken."

"As a symbol of my love and commitment to you, I give you this ring in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

"This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love."

"As a constant reminder of the commitment I have made to you today - and as a symbol of my trust in you and love for you, I give you this ring. Wear it with love and joy. I choose you, _____, to be my (wife/husband), this day and every day."

"I give this ring to you as a continuing reminder of the vows I have taken to assure you of my constant faith and abiding love."

C. Funeral Services

Death normally brings deep emotional hurt, a sense of loss, and feelings of unorganized direction. The funeral service should be seen as a comfort for inward pain, as one of the closure steps in bringing acceptance to the reality of death, and as a model of order for assuring that life can go on with direction and meaning. In view of such important purposes, the funeral service should be given adequate time in planning and preparation. The following information may be of value in providing ideas.

1. Types of Services

There are a variety of practices followed today in conducting funeral services. These are generally selected according to local customs or family preference. Some basic examples can be cited.

- a. A service in the funeral home followed by a committal service at the grave.
- b. A funeral service in the church followed by a committal service at the grave.
- c. A brief private service at the funeral home, a committal service at the grave, followed by a memorial service in the church.

The choice of these or other options should be made by the family with guidance from the funeral director and the pastor. The pastor should fit into their desires as much as possible.

2. Content of Services

Procedures in handling the family and the service in a funeral home or the local church will vary. A new pastor will do well to inquire from the local church leadership or funeral director about customs or practices. Any significant changes should take place by suggestion to and approval by those involved.

a. The private and/or main services

The order of each service should be carefully planned so that its parts flow together and will occupy an appropriate amount of time. It is well to remember that the effectiveness of a service is not determined by its length. Generally the family and each participant will appreciate a copy of the service order beforehand.

- Prayer

This is one of our most valuable privileges in relationship with God. To talk to him in critical moments of need like sorrow focuses our hearts and minds on someone bigger than ourselves and our problems. The invocation immediately gives confidence as an invitation to the Lord's presence is verbally expressed. The pastoral prayer offers comfort as the person and adequacy of God is recognized and the needs of the family are presented as requests to the Lord. The closing prayer encourages faith and brings assurance that God will go with the sorrowing and provide for their future through his grace and strength.

-Music (congregational hymns and/or special music)

Music touches our emotions. Therefore, the healing ministry of a hymn or spiritual song may be greater than any words spoken by the pastor. Of course, the lyrics should offer genuine comfort through the communication of the greatness of God, of assurance through faith in him, and of the hope that is promised in the scriptures.

-Scripture reading(s)

There would be no way to know God and his son, Jesus Christ, without the revelation of the scriptures. Therefore, the scriptures should never be neglected at a funeral service. Through his word, God provides us with knowledge about life here and now as well as life after death. God brings comfort and hope in what the Bible says and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in powerful and life-changing ways.

-Principles concerning the message

It should not be too long (15-30 minutes)

It should be scriptural. Some suggestions are given here.

(1) For adults generally

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Psalms 10, 23, 46, 91 | 2 Corinthians 5:10-14 |
| Isaiah 40, 41 | 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 |
| John 11, 14 | 2 Timothy 4 |
| 1 Corinthians 15 | Revelation 20, 21 |

(2) For a child

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Samuel 1:27, 28 | Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14 |
| 2 Samuel 12:16-28 | Mark 10:13-16 |
| Psalms 23 | Revelation 7:16, 17 |
| Psalms 103 | |

(3) For youth

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| 2 Chronicles 34:3 | Ecclesiastics 12:1-7 |
| Luke 7:11-16 | |

Avoid too much eulogy. Wherein some of the great transformations in life have been exemplified in the departed brother or sister, it is appropriate to call attention to that fact but let it be accurate and realistic. Some may not recognize the one referred to.

Do include some tactful, clear presentation of the gospel so that people will know how to be right with God. Hearts are often searching and tender at the time of sorrow and some people never sit under the sound of biblical truth except at a funeral. Therefore, have something in the content that tells people how to have eternal life.

Let it be full of tenderness and comfort for the living. Jesus literally wept at the grave of Lazarus.

If the funeral is for a person who is not known to have been saved or one who has committed suicide, the pastor will need extra wisdom in relating to the family and in preparing to speak at the funeral. Never pass judgment upon the spiritual condition of the deceased. God knows; no one else does! Present the gospel and encourage a positive response to God in repentance and faith. Trust God for the results.

b. The committal service

- Procedure at the grave

Upon arrival at the cemetery, normally the pastor will go to the rear of the funeral car where he will await the removal of the casket which he will precede to the grave. He may be accompanied by the funeral director or the manager of the cemetery. Upon reaching the grave and when the casket is positioned, the pastor will stand at the foot of the grave where he conducts the committal service facing the bereaved as much as possible. These practices may vary according to local customs.

- Content of the service

The ingredients may include scripture readings, a possible hymn or special music, a committal statement followed by a prayer and benediction.

- Committal statement

These may be varied according to the discretion and creativity of the pastor. Some possible examples are suggested here.

For believers

It is with confident hope and faith in Jesus Christ, the living Son of God, that we lay away the body of this loved one, looking forward to the morning of the resurrection when she/he together with all the saints of God will be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven and shall be forever like him who loved us and gave himself for us. Until that morning we commit the body to its rest.

It is with calm assurance and eager anticipation of a blessed reunion in that glorious eternal home, whose builder and maker is God, that we lay to rest the body of our loved one and friend.

Forasmuch as Almighty God, in his loving providence, has taken from the earth the soul of our deceased loved one and friend, we commit the body to the grave and commit his/her spirit unto him who gave it. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

And now cherishing the memories that are forever precious, sustained by a faith that is stronger than death, and comforted by the hope of a life that shall endless be, all that is mortal of our loved one and friend, we commit to its resting place in the assurance that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not built by human hands, eternal in the heavens.

For a child

In the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the little children and blessed them, we commit to the ground the body of this dear child, in the assurance that his/her immortal spirit is at home with the heavenly Father. "They shall be mine, says the Lord Almighty, in the day when I make up my jewels."

For one not known to be a believer

Inasmuch as Almighty God, in his wise providence, has taken from this life the soul of this loved one, we commit his/her body to the grave and his/her spirit to God who gave it, in the assurance that he who is the loving savior and the perfect judge of all the earth shall do all things right and consistent with his mercy and grace.

IV. LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS AND COVENANT

A. Qualifications

1. Demonstrates visually and verbally that he/she has been born again and is walking in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and his body (1 John 1:6-7).

2. Evidences a servant attitude along with the gifts for fulfilling his/her task (Matthew 20:26-28; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. Is in heartfelt agreement with the purpose of this church which is "to make disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20) and bring believers to maturity in Christ (Colossians 1:28).
4. Is actively involved and regular in his/her attendance in the services of the church (Hebrews 10:25).
[Perhaps we might add: Unless his/her absence is unavoidable or he/she is engaged in ministry elsewhere!]
5. Will refrain from the public use of alcohol and tobacco so as not to bring offense to the name, the work or the church of Christ (Romans 14:29-22).
6. Agrees to enlist one personal intercessor who will pray daily for fruitful life and service other than a spouse.
7. Will enter joyfully into the covenant of loyalty and accountability for church leadership.

B. Covenant

1. That we will not listen to or willingly inquire after ill concerning one another.
2. That if we do hear any ill of each other, we will not be inclined to believe it.
3. That as soon as possible, we will communicate what we hear by speaking or writing to the person concerned.
4. That until we have done this, we will not write or speak a syllable of it to any other person.
5. That neither will we mention it, after we have done this, to any other person.
6. That we will not make any exception to any of these rules unless we think ourselves absolutely obliged in confidence.

I realize that as part of my leadership position, I must maintain a pure lifestyle. I realize that I am not only representing our church but more importantly the name of Christ. I agree to abide by the above qualifications and covenant rules.

Name _____ Date _____

Furthermore I realize that the power of the church comes only by prayer. Therefore I have contacted one other person (other than spouse) to support me in my leadership position by consistent prayer.

Prayer Partner _____

V. FAMILY LIFE AND SOCIAL ISSUES

A. FEC Position Papers

Under the leadership of the Board of Elders, several papers have been written on social and family issues from a theological perspective. These are included in the FEC Manual of Faith, Practice and Organization, and are listed here for reference.

1. **GUIDELINE STATEMENT PERTAINING TO MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE**

I. Nature and Relationship of Marriage

We believe that marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God as a permanent and totally intimate relationship between one man and one woman. It is intended to endure until it is broken by the death of one of its partners. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-6)

Marriage, which is the foundation of the family and the home, should be entered into with clear understanding of the teachings of Holy Scripture and in the fear of God. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

We believe that the Scriptures do not give liberty for a believer to marry a non-believer, for a believer “is free to be married...only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39 RSV). Violation of this principle would be out of harmony with the clear teaching of Scripture to “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). For this reason our churches should discourage such marriages and our pastors should decline to officiate in them. However, pastors should counsel with couples desiring to be married in hopes of leading the unbelieving person to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

II. Principles Concerning Divorce

We believe that divorce, the legal procedure by which human authority considers a marriage to be dissolved, is in opposition to God's original intention for marriage (Matthew 19:3-9; Romans 7:2,3). Therefore, when marital problems arise, the church, through authorized personnel, is responsible to give Scriptural instruction on the duty and way of forgiveness. Reconciliation is central and basic to Christianity. Because of this, divorce is nowhere encouraged in Scripture.

However, due to the hardness of the human heart, reconciliation may not always be possible. There are two clear cases in Scripture where divorce, though not encouraged, is permitted.

1. When one partner is converted in a marriage of two non-believers and the non-believing partner chooses to desert the other due to fundamental religious discordance without any solicitation or unbearable pressure from the believer, the latter is to let him/her depart and is free from the bond of marriage so that divorce is permissible (1 Corinthians 7:15).
2. When one of the partners in a marriage has committed adultery, the other partner is permitted to obtain a divorce (Matthew 19:9).

However, in either case love would constrain the offering of time, prayer, and forgiveness in behalf of the deserter or guilty one with a view to repentance and confession of the sin which would eliminate the need and right to pursue a divorce.

III. Principles Concerning Remarriage

A person who obtained a divorce which can be deemed biblically legitimate may enter another marriage relationship. However, in seeking to avoid any possible offense to the former partner or to anyone else, it would be acting in love to delay entering into another marriage relationship until the former partner dies or remarries or until, all avenues of reconciliation have been exhausted (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Romans 14: 14, 20-21; Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15).

A divorced person who obtained a divorce for any other reason than one deemed biblically legitimate may not enter another marriage relationship until, in addition to confessing the sin to God, to the partner sinned against, and to any person sinned with, he/she has waited until the former partner has died or entered into another marriage relationship.

IV. Suggested Guidelines for the Local Church Concerning Divorce and Remarriage

Each local church is encouraged to prayerfully and carefully develop its own procedures in handling divorce or divorce and remarriage situations. It is under obligation to offer love, understanding, and respect. It should make available appropriate counsel and provide faithful prayer support. The following suggestions may be helpful.

- A. The church through its designated leadership is responsible to provide clear understanding of Scriptural principles describing divorce and/or remarriage to any contemplating such action.
- B. Any member of the local church who is unwilling to heed the counsel and institution of church leadership as it outlines the Biblical principles in this matter shall be subject to the discipline of the church. Church discipline should follow the normal course in dealing with impudent members who persist in their sin.
- C. Divorced or divorced and remarried persons in membership or requesting membership, who have repented, confessed their sin to God and to any other persons directly involved, and have made restitution in whatever way it is possible, should be considered as all other persons who have been freed from their sins through meeting the conditions for forgiveness.
- D. In dealing with this sensitive and important issue, church leadership must seek to apply biblical principles to each individual situation. The goal of all actions should be to honor God in both the process and the outcome of dealing with broken relationships in a fallen world.

11/74 (revised 3/14/02)

2. POSITION PAPER ON ABORTION

I. PURPOSE

The issue of abortion has become a moral, theological, medical, sociological, psychological, and judicial concern. It is not our intention to address all these concerns. Rather it is our purpose to clarify our position regarding deliberate termination of fetal life and to define the role of the church in pro-life compassion. We have sought to provide timeless and universal conclusions based on a harmony of Scripture and medical science.

II. DEFINITION

Abortion is traditionally defined as the expulsion of a human fetus before it is viable or able to live on its

own. In the broad sense, abortion refers to both unavoidable pregnancy termination and deliberately induced extraction or expulsion of the fetus with the intent of terminating life. This paper deals with those deliberate terminations of life between fertilization and birth.

III. WHEN HUMAN LIFE BEGINS

We believe that human life begins at the moment of fertilization, which occurs in the completed union of the male sperm chromosomes with the female egg chromosomes.

Science tells us that the beginning of pregnancy is the beginning of human life separate from that of the mother. On the very first day of conception the color of the baby's eyes, skin, and hair is established, part of the child's genetic endowment. Twenty-eight days later the child's own heart is beating. As early as the eighth week his brain is actually producing recordable brain waves. At the end of twelve weeks the baby is completely formed: no new organs will develop; it remains only for this fragile creation of God to grow larger and more perfect. From conception on there is no point in which the living being in the mother's womb is not a human being!

The Bible indicates that the developing fetus is already human life in God's sight. It makes no distinction in principle between the child after birth and the fetus in the womb. The same Hebrew word, yeled, is used of children generally as well as of the child in the womb in Exodus 21:22. The same Greek word, brephos, is used of the young Hebrew children slaughtered in Acts 7:19, and of the unborn baby, John the Baptist, in his mother's womb in Luke 1:41-44.

IV. RELATED BIBLICAL STATEMENTS

A. God knows each person from the moment of conception.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place.

Psalm 139:13-16

B. An unborn child has moral quality.

Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalm 51:5

C. An unborn child is alive and responsive.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings, the baby leaped in her womb...As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Luke 1:41-44

D. God reveals His purpose and calling for an unborn child in the following statement which was made before John the Baptist was conceived.

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Luke 1:15b

E. The same value is given to the life of an unborn child as to the adult life of a mother.

If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth premature/y but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Exodus 21:22-25

F. God can and sometimes does over-rule the natural inability to conceive as well as the ability to conceive.

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah, as he had said.

Genesis 21:1

Genesis 4:25, 30:22; Judges 13:3; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:31

G. God holds us responsible for murder.

You shall not murder.

Exodus 20:16

V. STATEMENT OF POSITION

Because we believe in the sacredness of human life, which is created in the image of God; and because we believe that human life begins at the moment of fertilization, we abhor and decry any attempt to deliberately induce the extraction or expulsion of the human fetus with the intent of terminating life at any time between fertilization and birth.

When medical science concludes that a mother's physical life is endangered by prolonging pregnancy, it is appropriate for the family to consider separating the unborn child from the mother. At such time, every attempt should be made to save both mother and child.

VI. ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN PRO-LIFE COMPASSION

We believe qualified personnel should be provided by each local church to inform its constituency regarding:

- A. Abortion
- B. Abortive birth control methods
- C. The need for caring individuals to minister in situations which may involve abortion
- D. Activity in social and political areas that may change society's views regarding abortion and uphold Scriptural injunctions.

The church must lovingly proclaim the biblical standard of morality (Exodus 20:16), Understanding, love, and counsel should be extended to those who struggle in making personal choices when facing very difficult circumstances in this area. Additionally, the church must provide help and counsel for persons who have had an abortion.

Our consolation is that God in Christ can and has been restoring fractured lives ever since the creation of man. He does not treat sin; He removes it. He says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). When God cleanses us, we are clean even though Satan would seek to immobilize us with a lie. Redeemed, we walk in the light of the redemption, and sin no more as before. While the memory of the act will be retained, guilt for the act can be removed. How marvelous the forgiveness of God!

Charles F. Greco, "3000 Babies Dead," *In Support of Life*, p.4. (Statements issued by Rev. Charles P. Greco)

8/84 (revised 3/14/02)

I. WOMEN**A. Man and women are image bearers of equal value and significance.**

Genesis 1:26, 27 clearly presents the fact that human kind, male and female, was made in the image and likeness of the Triune God. Though the circumstances of their creation differed, the male and female persons shared equally in that image. Not only are the male and female equal in personhood, but they also find equality in spiritual union with Christ. Indeed, all distinctions of race, rank, or sex are removed in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:27, 28)

B. Man and women are sexually and physically different.

While this fact seems obvious to many, there are those who seek to obliterate its validity and/or ramifications. The result of recognizing and appreciating the differences between man and woman is fulfillment and understanding rather than competition and pride.

C. Man and women are functionally distinct.

God has ordained a role or functional distinction between equals, man and woman, in the area of authority and leadership. Man is the designated head. The fact that final human authority belongs to a man does not imply male superiority. Equality and submission are compatible as demonstrated by Christ in His submission to the Father, though He was equal with the Father. Such designation of authority in role relationships is necessary for the harmonious functioning of home and church.

Scripture forthrightly speaks of the headship of the husband in the marriage relationships. (Ephesians 5:22, 23 for example.) However, his headship does not apply to single women or to other married women. (Scripture does not teach the headship of every man over every woman.)

II. CHURCH**A. Gifts in the Church**

There is every evidence that the gifts of the Holy Spirit spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 were distributed to all believers. All of the gifts were entrusted to individual believers for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). The very strong prohibition made in 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35 was directed to a distinct problem involving the improper use of spiritual gifts, and it apparently was not intended for universal application.

When the Lord entrusts gifts to men or women, the church has no right to deny the proper use of those gifts. And when the Lord withholds gifts, the church has no right to assume that gifts should have been given. The same Spirit who distributes gifts to individuals is also the One who gives wisdom to the other members of the body to recognize those gifts to benefit from their use. Within the guidelines of Scripture (orderliness, concern for the whole body, and mutual submission) both men and women should be encouraged to teach, witness, prophesy, pray, and work in any department of the church, using those gifts given to them for the building up of the body of Christ.

B. Leadership in the Church

God has designated that a man hold the highest position(s) (i.e. recognized teaching authority and administrative head) in the local church. The reasons are:

1. Creation order (Genesis 2:20b-23; 1 Timothy 2:11-13)
2. Woman's deception and resultant sin (1 Timothy 2:14)

The teaching authority and administrative head will of necessity delegate various responsibilities to other men and women in the body in keeping with their spiritual gifts. Delegated responsibility given to man or woman should produce humility rather than pride. While accepting and fulfilling delegated leadership positions, a woman should neither seize nor aspire to the highest positions of authority in the church.

III. CULTURE

A. Old Testament Culture

The traditional role of the Jewish woman dictated that many of the Old Testament women (Sarah, Miriam, Hannah, Ruth, and others) served God in a behind-the-scenes, supportive manner. However, God also accomplished some mighty things through women who were in positions of influence and leadership. In 2 Kings 22:14, Huldah served as a prophetess through whom God's message was given to the priest Hilkiah. Deborah, a judge, traveled with Barak and directed his work (Judges 4). Esther, queen in Persia, was the instrument used to save the Jews from mass slaughter. (Esther 4-8).

B. New Testament Culture

The New Testament shows women in a variety of ministries. In the gospels, they are seen as helpers to the Lord and the twelve. Christ encouraged one to become an evangelist to men and women in Sychar (John 4:28ff). Mary and Martha were close friends who served the Lord. He encouraged their service and worship. He commended a poor widow for out-giving all the rich people. His first post-resurrection appearance was to a woman. The first resurrection message Christ sent to the apostles was delivered by a woman. There were women among the 120 on the day of Pentecost. Ananias and Sapphira had equal opportunity and received equal judgment. Dorcas was always doing good and helping the poor. Priscilla apparently provided assistance to Paul and helped explain the gospel to Apollos.

Some see significance in the fact that no women were among the twelve and that there were none among the seven chosen to wait on tables. No woman was known to be appointed as a pastor or other church head. But women were encouraged to pray and prophesy. They participated in praise. They taught the Word of God. The daughters of Philip had the gift of prophecy, and there is no indication that the exercise of the gift was restricted.

Because the church was born in a context which was primarily Jewish, we cannot know how much these early practices were determined by that fact. Women in that generation did not have the same educational opportunities as men. Therefore, they were not adequately trained to assume leadership responsibilities.

C. Present Culture

Today's culture has influenced church organization. Commissions and committees are not Biblically commanded, but they assist in church administration. In these and other cultural innovations that are not

in violation of Scriptural principles, discernment and proper attitudes must dictate a woman's personal decision regarding her role in the church.

Culture also varies from society to society throughout the world. How sensitive the church must be in its representation of Christ to the world. Certainly in Christ, women find freedom and equality with their brothers. Paul's reminder offered on the subject of meat offered to idols states this principle: "Only be careful that this power of choice--this permission and liberty to do as you please-which is yours, does not (somehow) become a hindrance (cause of stumbling) to the weak or overscrupulous (giving them an impulse to sin)" (1 Corinthians 8:9, Amplified). At no time in any culture should a woman's (or man's) conduct "give opponents of the faith occasion for slander or reproach" (1 Timothy 5:14, Amplified).

IV. CONCLUSION

When the skeleton of abiding principles regarding the role of women in the church is fleshed out by the overriding principle of submission to one another in love and out of reverence to Christ (Ephesians 5.21), there is not a constricting set of rules. Rather we have a set of guidelines which challenges each woman to seek God for specific direction in using her gifts, fulfilling her potential as a child of God.

When dedicated, spiritual persons are in leadership in the church extensive and meaningful opportunities for service will open to women. The Christian man will not tyrannize the woman, nor will the Christian woman usurp power and authority. They will rejoice in their unity and freedom in Christ and complement each other in the work of the Kingdom.

3/82 (revised 3/14/02)

Position paper for the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches prepared by the Board of Elders and a committee of women selected by the officers of the Women's Auxiliary.

4. GUIDELINES FOR GRANTING CREDENTIALS TO SEPARATED/DIVORCED PERSONS

God designed marriage as the foundational element of human society. As such, it is a divine institution ordained by Him. Therefore, any violation of the marriage relationship must be viewed as being less than God's intended ideal and ultimate standard.

However, with the rising tide of divorce and remarriage, it is inevitable that the church will have to struggle with the issue of ministry for those who have fallen short of this Biblical goal. All such efforts must be carried out with faithfulness to the Scriptures, concern for the mission of the church to the world, and love for all persons concerned.

On the one hand, consideration must be given to the timeless principle that "sowing and reaping" often leaves permanent marks in this world, to the terrible toll on human lives that divorce and remarriage is taking in our society as well as the church, and to the importance of the highest model for God's design of marriage and the Christian home by leaders in ministry. On the other hand, carefulness must be given to assure that many useful people who have been forgiven and who wish to commit their lives to service are not completely excluded from a ministry that might permit the fullest exercise of their gifts. Such careful consideration demands that each person with credentials who becomes divorced will be considered individually in light of the following guidelines.

- I. The Lord has established high requirements of spiritual maturity and performance for leaders in the church.

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Luke 12:48b

- II. When a person has separated/divorced, he has clearly deviated from the high standard of God's Word.

At the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew

19:4-6

- III. If it is known that a person with credentials is having serious problems in his marriage relationship, the Board of Elders will seek to make contact with the couple and offer counsel toward the goal of healing and reconciliation.

If separation has already taken place or there are some indications that immorality was involved by the person with credentials, the credentials will be suspended. Credentials may be reinstated when humble and repentant attitudes are evident, when a healthy marriage relationship is restored and when any other requirements deemed appropriated by the Board of Elders are fulfilled.

- IV. A leader with credentials who becomes divorced or marries a divorced person will have his credentials suspended regardless of the reason the divorce was granted. Decisions about renewing credentials will be made after due counsel and evaluation by the Board of Elders according to the consideration of Part VI of these guidelines.
- V. If a candidate and/or his spouse has ever been divorced, each one divorced must complete a separate questionnaire which will assist in evaluation and decision-making by the Board of Elders.
- VI. In dealing with this sensitive and important issue, conference leaders must seek to apply biblical principles to each individual situation. The goal of all actions should be to honor God in both the process and the outcome of dealing with broken relationships in a fallen world.

5/87 (revised 3/14/02)

Note: On February 18, 2009 the Board of Elders moved unanimously to not issue a credential (Pastor License or Ordination) to any man who has been divorced. In doing this, the board, in essence, re-affirmed the historic position of the EMC/FEC Elder Board, and the position articulated by the board on September 21, 1982.

5. HOMOSEXUALITY

There are seven explicit passages within the Word of God which refer to homosexual behavior. (Genesis 19:4-5; Leviticus 18:22-23; Leviticus 20:13; Judges 19:22-23; Romans 1:18-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11) All of these scriptures clearly present such behavior as immoral and sinful. Beyond these seven references the whole of Scripture bears witness that God created human sexuality to be practiced only within the marriage relationship between a man and woman. Therefore all references to sexual temptation, promiscuity, purity, faithfulness, and so on; all references to our bodies being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1

Corinthians 6:19); all commands to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1), to “die to sins” (1 Peter 2:24), to “crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24), and so on - - all such references must be examined and understood to pertain as much to homosexual as to heterosexual activity. When Scripture says, “Flee from sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18) and when it denounces promiscuity, debauchery, impurity and the lusts of the flesh the background is quite simply that sexual intimacy is legitimate only within the marriage relationship. If intimacy with a member of the opposite sex is inappropriate outside of marriage, how much more inappropriate is sexual intimacy with a member of the same sex.

The Church must realize that, although God’s Word clearly forbids homosexual practice, God offers to all persons not only cleansing and forgiveness but also healing and the power to change. (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) The Good News of Jesus Christ is a gospel of forgiveness and new life, not a gospel of condemnation. This gospel of forgiveness and new life has been given by God to the *whole* world and we, as members of the body of Jesus Christ, are responsible to lovingly share this gospel with the *whole* world. We are to boldly confess that God has identified homosexual behavior as sin while at the same time selflessly demonstrate the love of God to those ensnared by this sin.

The New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7) lists qualifications for Christian ministers. Included among these is the instruction that a minister “must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, and self-controlled.” It is clear that anyone practicing homosexual behavior is living contrary to these qualifications and is therefore unqualified for any of the credentials of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

3/14/02

B. NAE Position Papers

Each year the National Association of Evangelicals, of which FEC is a member, writes resolution papers on contemporary, social and family issues that need to be addressed. These have been well written and most are in harmony with FEC faith and practice. Some have been included here.

1. Alcohol Abuse

In 1968, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) addressed with alarm the social, moral and spiritual consequences of alcohol abuse. At that time, we called for the enforcement of existing laws on alcohol sales, possession and use, as well as the enactment of new laws against drunken driving. In deepening with our historic stance, we also called on our churches to take seriously the national problem of alcohol use, educating their members to its dangers and encouraging them to practice abstinence.

Today, the problem of alcohol use has been so aggravated that among experts in the field of substance abuse, a growing consensus is condemning alcohols a “gateway drug” into illegal drugs and, addiction. Statistics are also mounting which show that there is a link between alcohol and crime, fatal accidents, domestic violence, family breakdown, personal debilitation and suicide. Children and youth have become both victims and abusers.

The magnitude of the problem is so great that a number of groups have emerged to fight alcohol abuse. These groups, however, are not currently supported by a significant public consensus or by the political, medical, corporate or religious communities. Parents who use alcohol are caught in the contradiction of trying to be a role model for their children while failing to set an example for them.

The time has come for the National Association of Evangelicals to speak and act again in the following ways:

- a. Strongly encourage those national organizations which are against alcohol use and abuse, and to join

them in condemning the media message that equate alcohol with the good life for adults and which communicates to you the message: “you can’t have fun without alcohol.”

- b. Urge NAE churches to make alcohol education and ministry to alcohol victims a priority.
 - c. Request the media and the corporate community to join in sponsoring informative programs on the “down side” of alcohol use.
 - d. Request public figures, such as athletes and entertainers, to avoid endorsing alcohol use.
 - e. Promote congregational legislation that would
 - Label alcohol as a dangerous drug which can result in personal and social harm;
 - Ban advertising of alcohol on television.
 - f. Urge corporate advertisers not to jointly sponsor television programs, such as the Olympics and other athletic events, with the alcohol industry.
2. Child Care and the Federal Government

“Children are an inheritance from the Lord,” say the Psalmist. They are a precious gift from God. Parents’ concern for children should come ahead of career success, personal satisfaction, or their own personal desires.

Contemporary America unfortunately tends to forget that children are a trust from the Lord. Numerous new problems have emerged, including a new wave of selfish materialism. Child abuse and neglect are increasing. Households headed by single parents are faced with added stress. Children are often used as pawns in custody battles. Social trends and economic needs require millions of mothers to enter the work force resulting in their children being reared by care-providers rather than by loving and responsible parents.

Feelings on what is appropriate for the Christian family run deep and there is no one position that prevails within the evangelical community. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), therefore, calls upon Christian families to carefully consider all relevant factors touching the exudation and schooling of their children.

NAE affirms that education is not simply pouring facts into a mind. It is a lifelong endeavor which involves building understandings, Perspectives, values and life skills through direct experience, personal processing of information, social interaction and inner struggle. The success of these learning processes depends on the readiness of the student to grow, as well as the quality of the education offered.

The home, church and school all play important educational roles. Clearly both the church and family are responsible for communicating Christ and Christian values, the foundation on which all learning will build. Furthermore, the positive witness of Christian families and the broader family of the church ideally will complement what is learned in school. However, we live in a world where the “ideal” and the “reality of life” are rarely synonymous.

Schools, whether public or private, are not all of equal quality. Before enrolling a child in any school, parents must explore the school’s educational philosophy and environment and decide, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how to best fulfill their responsibility to raise their children in the nurture of the Lord.

We urge honest consideration of the following:

- a. The quality of the education offered;
- b. The perspective or world view expressed in that education;
- c. The specific needs of each child – the ways the home, church and school can work together to help the child mature in faith;
- d. The best methods for Christian teachers, parents and student to serve as salt and light in a needy world;
- e. Whether the decision reflects the practice of good stewardship of time and financial resources.

NAE recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

In support of all parents seeking to make good decisions regarding the schooling of their children, NAE affirms the responsibility and right of parents to choose the educational options most consistent with their religious conscience and best suited for their children. We further affirm the importance of mutual respect between parents whose views on schooling may differ and NAE encourages all Christian parents to develop a Christian world view and life style and to Disciple their children in that view.

3. Family Violence

In a society under stress, the family is impacted. Domestic violence has escalated into an urgent national problem with spiritual as well as physical, legal, psychological and social implications that cannot be ignored.

We must be alert to the facts:

- Domestic violence is evident in one out of ten families throughout the nation;
- Domestic violence ranges from physical brutality and sexual abuse to mental cruelty and neglect;
- Domestic violence is a pattern often perpetuated in the family from generation to generation;
- Domestic violence is no respecter of social class, status, educational achievement, age, sex, race or ethnic origin.

More alarming, pastors and other clergy are reporting increasing numbers of parishioners—both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence—coming to them for counsel. It is evident Christian families are under stress and vulnerable to violence.

Therefore, in keeping with our long-stand commitment to the family as an institution ordained by God, the National Association of Evangelicals affirms that the Bible:

- a. Provides the principles for the prevention of family violence (Eph. 4:31-32).
- b. Forbids all forms of violence or abuse in human and family relationships while still upholding proper parental discipline (Eph. 4:25-29; Heb. 12:7-11)
- c. Instructs us on family relationships between husbands and wives; and children and parents (Eph. 5:21-6:4 and 1 Peter 3:7). To repudiate the mutuality of responsibility between family generations is to “deny the faith” (1 Tim. 5:8 NIV).

Furthermore, NAE calls upon local churches to develop a biblically-based philosophy of discipline; oppose violence in the media which contributes to family violence: urge all segments of our society to cooperate with the church and civil government to put an end to family violence in its various forms; call upon society to promote justice and support laws against family violence which can help provide an orderly framework for our lives together, recognizing the rights and responsibilities of families to

promise/exercise appropriate discipline; seek training in the prevention, treatment and follow-up of family violence; and minister to the needs of both perpetrators and victims of family violence.

4. AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is rapidly becoming the number one public health problem in the world. In this decade, tens of thousands of Americans have contracted AIDS and more than a million Americans are carriers of the AIDS virus. For those who have contracted AIDS, currently there is no known medical cure, and thus the disease is fatal. The evidence is not clear concerning the long-term results for those who are carriers of the AIDS virus. The Surgeon General of the United States has called AIDS “the most serious matter any health official of any nation has ever faced.”

Although there is the urgent need for education regarding AIDS, education without reference to values ignores the moral dimensions of the problem. Therefore, government or private sector programs that deny the moral element of the problem are inadequate remedies. While there are innocent sufferers of the disease, the fact remains that two primary groups of individuals with AIDS are practicing homosexual men and drug addicts who share needles. The Nexus between immoral behavior and the spread of the AIDS virus is self-evident.

Furthermore, AIDS is first and foremost a public health concern, not a civil rights issue. Hence, any proposed legislation that would confer special “civil rights” on persons afflicted with AIDS, but threatens the health of others, is totally unacceptable. We believe appropriate legislation regarding AIDS would require testing of high risk groups, reporting of those with the disease to public health officials on the same basis as other sexually-transmitted diseases, and closing of bathhouses and other facilities that permit promiscuous sexual activity.

But legislation and the best efforts of public health officials have their limits. Our Christian faith offers hope for the victims of AIDS. This faith offers also a realistic way of life that will curb the spread of this tragic disease in that our faith calls for chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage. For this reason, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) calls upon the Christian Church to proclaim the hope that God has provided in Jesus Christ and to promote the practice of biblical sexual morality. We encourage pastors to request couples coming to them for marriage to consider having AIDS tests and to share the results with each other before marriage. We further urge that, with Christian compassion, we offer the hope of Christ’s redemption and grace to victims of AIDS.

Local churches should take initiative and leadership in ministering to AIDS patients and those infected with the virus. We cannot permit fear or apathy to keep us from bringing the life-changing resources of our Christian faith to show who suffer from the dread AIDS disease.

5. Homosexuality

The scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Genesis 2:24), and formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together they were to become one flesh. In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bonds of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.

Homosexual activity, like adulterous relationships, is clearly condemned in the Scriptures. In Leviticus 18:22 God declares the practice of homosexuality an abomination in His sight. In Romans 1:26-27 the

practice of homosexuality is described as a degrading and unnatural passion. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 identifies the practice of homosexuality as a sin that, if persisted in, brings grave consequences in this life and excludes one from the Kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul strong in his condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, also testifies that those once engaged in homosexuality were among those who were forgiven and changed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). This declaration offers hope both for forgiveness and for healing. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations needs to maintain the belief that all human beings have sinned, and that all Christians have received God's mercy while helpless, ungodly, and hostile to God. In the name of Christ we proclaim forgiveness, cleansing, restoration and power for godly living for all who repent and believe the gospel.

We believe that homosexuality is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender, or national origin, all of which are free from moral implication. We believe that homosexuality is a deviation from the Creator's plan for human sexuality. While, homosexuals an individuals are entitled to Civil Rights, including equal protection of the law, the NAE opposes legislation which could extend special consideration to such individuals based upon their "sexual orientation." Such legislation inevitably is perceived as legitimating the practice of homosexuality and elevates that practice to the level of an accepted moral standard. While maintaining our opposition to proposed so-called "Gray Rights" legislation, where such legislation has been enacted into law, NAE strongly urges that churches and religious organizations be exempted from compliance by amendment to the law. The position and practice of such organizations regarding homosexuality are determined by their religious convictions. This we hold to be a grave matter of religious freedom. Individual Christians, ministers, and congregations should compassionately proclaim the Good News of forgiveness and encourage those involved in homosexual practices to cease those practices, accept forgiveness, and pray for deliverance as nothing is impossible with God. Further, we should accept them into fellowship upon confession of faith and repentance, as we would any other forgiven sinner (1 Corinthians 6:11).

We further call upon pastors and theologians, along with medical and sociological specialists within the Christian community to expand research on the factors which give rise to homosexuality and to develop adequate therapy, pastoral care and congregational support leading to complete restoration.

6. Pornography and Obscenity

In recent years there has been a growing portrayal of sexual immorality and deviation in the cinema, television, radio and the print media. The lifestyle modeled for our children on mass media outlets portraying these excesses is dehumanizing and morally destructive. Such ideas and ideals promoted by mass media are in direct contradiction to the biblical lifestyle.

Furthermore, the eight billion dollar pornography industry has grown to epidemic proportions and is invading all the segments of our society. Pastors, counselors, social agencies and law officers are seeing families broken and lives adversely affected as well as persons of both sexes victimized by this plague of pornography and obscenity. This industry, controlled largely by organized crime, is responsible for corrupting the lives of children as well as adults, and most alarming of all is the proliferation of child pornography.

Aware of this insidious evil in our society and seeking to be obedient to our prophetic task as God's people, the National Association of Evangelicals therefore declares itself as follows:

- a. We are committed to Jesus Christ who calls us as the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" to be involved in the solution of the problem of pornography.

- b. We are committed to speak out against pornography and obscenity at every opportunity.
- c. We encourage our congregations and denominations to observe a Pornography Awareness Sunday of Week.
- d. We urge our congregations to become involved in appropriate plans of action in their communities.
- e. We commit ourselves to participate as an association in the National Coalition Against Pornography.
- f. We call upon the President of the United States to declare publicly his support for the enforcement of obscenity laws and to order the Justice Department to enforce the existing obscenity laws.
- g. We urge Christians everywhere to seek ways to ministry more effectively to both the victims and perpetrators of obscenity and pornography.

7. Gambling

The National Association of Evangelicals reaffirms its opposing to gambling and lotteries, including those run by the government. These are socially, morally and economically destructive. They are rooted in covetousness and violate the biblical work ethic.

We believe that gambling in any form is potentially addictive. It is a social evil that feeds upon greed and sells a set of fantasy values that exploits people. It harms especially the poor who can least afford to forfeit their financial resources on the promise of instant wealth. The tragic end result is often deepened poverty and increased welfare rolls, to say nothing of the emotional damage and disillusionment experienced by vast numbers of planned losers.

Gambling undermines the economic base of a nation in that it reduces the purchasing power of the people. Money gambled by wager earners cannot be spent to purchase good and services of constructive and productive businesses.

Compulsive gambling causes the individual's character to be weakened and to disintegrate. It leads to indolence and self-delusion, breaks up families and can lead to crime, loss of jobs and even suicide.

Since we deplore the exploitation of the weakness of humanity, the National Association of Evangelicals calls upon all who are in positions of influence and decision-making to seek other means by which to raise revenue. We further call upon churches and schools to conduct programs that will inform people of the evils and dangers of gambling.

8. Racism and Resolve for Reconciliation

Throughout its history, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has called for improved race relations in both church and society. Based on a 1956 resolution, NAE judged racial discrimination as a violation of the teachings of Christ and has consistently supported the struggle for civil rights of racial minorities (see resolutions of 1064 and 1965). While urging evangelical Christians to support civil legislation that would promote equal opportunity for all Americans, NAE admonished member denominations and churches to "accelerate the desegregation of their own institutions both in spirit and practice and the opening of the doors of all sanctuaries of worship to every person, regardless of race or national origin."

However, beyond these public pronouncements, the evangelical community needs to do substantially more to address the insidious sin of racism. Recent distressing manifestations of racism in our nation should be of deep concern to all who are committed to the gospel of Christ, which transcends barriers of race and social class (1 Corinthians 12:13). Failure to reach out to all races constitutes a rejection of God's will and brings scandal to the very gospel we profess to proclaim (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). At this time, we especially need to reach out to encourage economic opportunity and equal treatment in our

criminal justice system.

The deep roots of racism in American history and culture suggest that the road toward better race relations, to righting the wrongs of the past, is a lone one. But it is a road, nonetheless, that NAE and its member denomination and churches must willingly travel in obedience to God's Word. As one step, we commit ourselves to take with utmost seriousness the current NAE dialogue with leaders of the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA). We give thanks to God for the mutual understanding that has been growing through joint interaction of our Social Action Commissions.

Practical expressions of our commitment include praying and working together with NBEA to encourage local churches to reject de facto segregation; encouraging partnerships between black and white churches to plan churches in urban American; working aggressively to remove all barriers to Christian fellowship and communion; affirming biblical norms in race relations in churches and communities; challenging schools, colleges, universities and seminaries to provide caring and loving environments for students of various races or economic classes.

NAE further encourages better relationships with denominations and congregations that minister in the black community. For example, we can join hand in joint ministry projects, including pulpit exchanges, family retreats, youth camps, counseling services, adoption services, Christian schools and prison ministries. We can also join hand in ministries of mercy toward the homeless, unwed mothers and individuals with AIDS.

NAE also challenges ministers to take greater care in preaching "the whole counsel of God," particularly as it relates to the sin of racism. Congregations need to be confronted with the reality that salvation is not based on social condition, class, race or national origin, but solely on the grace of God. If Christians take seriously the doctrine of salvation by grace, they must demonstrate that fundamental principle in dealings with others.

Because racial attitudes are profoundly shaped in the home, NAE encourages Christian parents to give careful attention to the attitudes they model and teach to their children. In raising children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, parents need to foster a biblical respect for all people regardless of race or economic condition, as man and woman created in the image of God.

Finally, the NAE staff, Executive Committee and Board of administration resolve to contribute to improved race relations through appointments, programs, publications and employment practices.

RECONIZING THE NEED for racial reconciliation, a Convocation was convened in Chicago on January 6-7, 1995. The Convocation on Reconciliation, sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA), was called out of a conviction that God had called us to disciple the nations of the world, and we were hindered in this task by our fragmentation over the sin of racism. We proposed the Convocation so we could come together and strategize on how to address the sin of racism and undo its harmful effects in the evangelical community. During the Convocation, we isolated five major barriers to reconciliation within our community and established action steps to overcome each one. Those barriers, which we resolve to address through the continuing work of our "Evangelical Task Force on Reconciliation," are as follows:

- a. Unbiblical Theology. Racism has in great part been validated, defended and practiced through the preaching, teaching and living of a unbiblical theology. There is a need to repent for this distortion of the work of God which has resulted in subtle and blatant expressions of racism. We call on the entire evangelical community, especially Christian organizations, colleges and seminaries, denominations and local churches, theological journals and magazines to raise and address this issue in ways that

challenge us to develop, practice and model the unity of all God's people as members of the Body of Christ.

- b. **Repentance and Forgiveness.** There exists an unwillingness on the part of many to repent and forgive. We call for services of confession and forgiveness throughout the evangelical community in order that barriers to the reconciliation process may be removed. This process which began at the Convocation is expected to continue at the 1995 conventions of both NAE and NBEA, and to culminate at a joint meeting of both groups. Furthermore, to continue modeling the spirit of reconciliation, we call upon NAE and NBEA to maintain and strengthen close working ties. We further call upon our members, and the broader evangelical community, to read on the subject of racial reconciliation and enter into a cross-cultural accountability relationship to put the information into practice. We also call upon all evangelical institutions to include racial justice and reconciliation as one of their core values.
- c. **Fear and Mistrust.** Racial reconciliation is hindered by fear and mistrust. We call upon evangelical leaders to take the risk necessary to develop honest loving relationships across racial lines, and to educate our various constituencies on the biblical basis for racial harmony and reconciliation, recognizing we best combat fear by demonstrate love that is holistic in word and deed.
- d. **Attitudes and Perceptions.** Attitudes toward other races can be subconscious and subliminally acquired, based on erroneous perceptions caused by fear, ignorance, misleading media images, negative experiences, misinterpretation of Scripture, cultural and historical myths, traditions and stereotypes, and poor modeling from parents, teachers, and others. These attitudes and perceptions are difficult to change and require commitment to international action to raise the awareness of the need, possibility and benefits of change. We call upon evangelicals to seriously address this issue and develop strategies to remove this barrier to reconciliation through personal and institutional involvement with persons of other races. We also call for the development of curriculum to train children and teachers an appreciation for racial and cultural differences and similarities, and encourages the celebration of unity in the midst of diversity.
- e. **Institutional Racism.** Given that conscious and unconscious institutional racism within the church and society continues to exist in the form of systemic and structural discrimination, segregation, and stereotyping, so that one need not consciously think racist thoughts to carry out exclusive, select racist policies, we call upon evangelicals to prophetically engage these injustices in all of their ungodly forms. We acknowledge that "judgment must begin at the house of God" because of our exclusive hermeneutic, our privatized faith and our unbiblical notion of the kingdom. As we set our own house in order, we will call upon evangelicals to prophetically and courageously engage society's injustices, and to seek out and establish permanent, committed relationships that will serve to foster among evangelicals an aggressive new climate for the pursuit of true justice and opportunity for all. In so doing, we believe the effectiveness of our Christian witness and our efforts to evangelize our nation will be greatly enhanced.

C. Other Papers

Other papers have been and will be written by churches, organizations and individuals that reflect the beliefs of FEC on family and social issues. Some are included here.

1. AIDS & HIV

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that salvation is available to all people through personal repentance and confession of faith in Christ. Therefore, we seek to reach out to all

people who need salvation, including those suffering from the international epidemic of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) caused by infection of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Following the example Jesus gave during his earthly ministry of providing care for the spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs of people, we commit ourselves to this holistic approach of ministering to persons with AIDS and their families.

According to recent research, the virus is spread by sexual intercourse, direct blood transfer and intravenous drug use. The virus can also be passed from infected mothers to their babies during pregnancy, at birth, or shortly after birth. To all persons who have contracted the virus, regardless of the mode of transmission, our ministry shall emphasize redemption through Christ's love and sacrifice, compassionate support of all involved, to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in response to the repentance and compassion of His people.

We welcome those afflicted with infection by HIV/AIDS into our fellowship. We recognize that in order to attain the purpose of the Body of Christ, the church must work in harmony, utilizing and encouraging the spiritual gifts of all the members. Therefore, we invite members with afflictions as well as those who are healthy to participate in ministry to the Body of Christ according to their spiritual maturity and obedience to Christ and His word.

Recognizing that HIV/AIDS is a worldwide problem, we will endorse and encourage Christian organizations whose arms are extended to all people for the sake of Christ, including the Conference of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches.

We as a body have a particular concern for the children of the world affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis. Wanting to keep our ministry "pure and faultless" (James 1:27), we shall encourage and support agencies, families, and individuals willing to minister to these children through foster care and adoption. (Two major groups are those orphaned by parents with AIDS and those infected at birth with HIV.) Should a parent or guardian of an HIV infected child desire fellowship at an FEC church, we shall seek to support him or her by providing child care (including infants) that is age appropriate. An infant whose HIV has progressed to AIDS requires a protective environment. An HIV infected child who is mobile and may be prone to accidental blood-to-blood contact will require special supervision.

Being aware of the complexity of the disease and the inclination toward fear due to the present prognosis of physical death for those diagnosed with AIDS, we commit ourselves to sound personal and corporate education. Corporate education about HIV/AIDS shall seek to provide scientifically based facts about the syndrome, including the infectious process, and progress of symptoms and related diseases. Education shall be presented within the context of a biblical view of God's law and of people as created in the image of God. Curriculum shall include:

- a. The truth of God concerning personal purity in sexual relationships.
- b. The responsibility of the Body of Christ to exercise proper care for the human body of each of its members and their neighbors.
- c. Precautions necessary and the prevention of HIV infection of well persons through possible infectious contacts.
- d. The danger persons with AIDS face regarding opportunistic infections carried to them by varied social contacts, including church fellowship.

Education shall remain current and be presented to children and adults on a timely basis. The purpose of this approach is to move the congregation from fear to compassion, and from compassion to action.

We commit ourselves to a specific yet flexible plan of ministry to address the needs of persons with AIDS and their families. This plan includes a coordinator of HIV/AIDS Ministry appointed by the Board of Elders. Anyone desiring support could approach this coordinator, or be referred by the pastoral staff or concerned friend.

The coordinator will work with the person referred to establish a network of support for spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs. We recognize that, as with any illness, a process of grief is set in motion at the diagnosis, and may include shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and loneliness. Informing family and friends of a terminal illness is a part of this painful process which often takes time to complete. The coordinator will assist persons with AIDS and their families regarding the issue of when and how they inform others of the diagnosis. A level of openness will be encouraged to provide opportunity for maximum support from the Church body.

We commit this ministry directed to people infected with HIV and those persons with AIDS to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May the mercies of Christ's redemption rest upon us and all we minister to for the glory of God the Father, the Creator of all persons.

2. Human Sexuality

Gender and sexuality is the design of an all-wise creator. In Genesis man and woman were the crown of God's creation because they were created in His image (Genesis 1:27). God created us as sexual beings, male and female. Or sexuality is a good gift from God, gladly to be accepted, enjoyed, honored and experienced to His glory. Together, man and woman possess complementing sexual identities that enable them to be good for one another. The sexual act was designed by God to be experienced exclusively between a man and a woman within the content of an enduring, faithful, loving marriage relationship. "*Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure,...*" (Hebrews 13:4), and was intended by God for the mutual pleasure of both husband and wife, and for the procreation of children. Any sexual act outside the marriage relationship is a violation of God's intended standard and design. "*It is God's will that you should be holy; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

The Church is God's depository of the truth, and that includes the truth about human sexuality. The Church, therefore, has the obligation and the responsibility to support and provide information for the family about the truths of human sexuality in the context of an open, honest, and loving setting.

3. Political Involvement

A helpful resource for pastors and their congregations in understanding biblical responsibilities related to political involvement is the *Christian Citizenship Ministry: A Manual for ACTION*. This booklet was published by the National Association of Evangelicals.

4. Footnote

Other papers fitting any of the three above categories may be added at the discretion of the FEC Board of Elders.