



Constitution

OF THE CARLISLE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PREAMBLE

We, the members of this congregation of the Evangelical Free Church of America, do hereby commit and voluntarily submit ourselves to the following Constitution:

DEFINITION

As used in this Constitution and By-Laws, the term congregation shall mean the members (as described in Article I of the By-Laws) of the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be "The Carlisle Evangelical Free Church".

ARTICLE II: STATEMENT OF FAITH

- 1.** We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of his will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and practice (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21).
- 2.** We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16; 2:9).
- 3.** We believe in God the Father, the sovereign authority who rules over all things, who authored the divine decrees, who gave his Son for our redemption and his Holy Spirit for our sanctification (set apart for God), in order to glorify himself (Deuteronomy 10:14; Daniel 2:20-22; John 17:1-6; 15:26).
- 4.** We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross, a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, he arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, he now is our High Priest and Intercessor. We also believe in the personal and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ before the millennium and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer (I Corinthians 15:3-4; I John 2:1; Luke 1:35; Acts 1:11; I Thessalonians 4:14-16; I John 3: 1-3).
- 5.** We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to convict men, regenerate the repentant sinner, baptize them into the Church, the Body of Christ, indwell them permanently, seal them unto the day of redemption, bestow spiritual gifts upon each one, and fill those yielded to him (John 16: 7-14; II Corinthians 7:9-10; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18; I Corinthians 12).
- 6.** We believe there exists a personal devil, the arch enemy of God and man. We further believe Satan to be the author of sin and the cause of the Fall, and that he has already been judged and will be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Job 1:6-7; Isaiah 14:12-17; Matthew 4:2-11; John 16:11; Revelation 20:10).
- 7.** We believe that man was created by God in innocence, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless state. Consequently, all men are sinners, incapable of pleasing God and are, therefore, under just condemnation, bound to hell, the place of eternal punishment. Only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation be obtained (Genesis 1:27; Romans 3:22-23; 5:12; Revelation 20:11-15; John 3:3).
- 8.** We believe that salvation is wholly "by grace through faith," free to all who believe and receive the blood atonement of Jesus Christ who died and rose again in our place in order that we might be declared righteous, and adopted into the family of God (Ephesians 2:8-10; 1:7; John 1:12-13; Hebrews 9:22; Galatians 4:5-7).

9. We believe that the Lord's Supper and Water Baptism by immersion (when possible) are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means of salvation (I Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 28:19-20).

10. We believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, have been regenerated and are baptized by the Holy Spirit upon conversion into the body of Christ of which he is the head (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4-6; Titus 3:5; Colossians 1:18).

11. We believe that only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church (Acts 2:47).

12. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the right under Christ, to decide and govern its affairs (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18).

13. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord, of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment (I Thessalonians 4:14-16; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:15; II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

ARTICLE III: PURPOSE

The purpose of this congregation is to: (1) provide fellowship for the worship of God, and the edification and encouragement of the believers in the unity of love and faith; (2) pursue a strong evangelistic effort in order to bring others, both at home and abroad, to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; and (3) provide training in the Scriptures for the fulfillment of every believer's responsibility to do his or her part of the work of the ministry of reconciliation.

ARTICLE IV: AFFILIATION

The congregation is affiliated with the "Evangelical Free Church of America, Incorporated" for the purpose of pursuing mutual objectives with the said Evangelical Free Church of America. This affiliation in no way affects the complete autonomy of this congregation.

ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

This congregation shall receive into its membership only individuals who give testimony of having accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who being thus born again give evidence in life of true faith in God, and manifest the fruits of Christian experience in the conduct of Christian life (as described in the Fellowship Covenant) and faith in accordance with Article II.

ARTICLE VI: INCORPORATION & OFFICERS

The Carlisle Evangelical Free Church shall be a Pennsylvania nonprofit corporation, organized in accordance with section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code of the United States. The officers of this corporation shall be: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary of the Elder Board.

ARTICLE VII: PROPERTY

VII:1. This congregation shall have the power to receive, either by gift or purchase, and to hold such real, personal or mixed property as is authorized by the laws of the State of Pennsylvania, as is deemed necessary for the business of the congregation, and shall have the power to dispose of such property by mortgage, deed or otherwise. All such property shall be held in the name of the congregation. The Elder Board shall have the power to receive, purchase, sell, lease, convey, mortgage, deed or otherwise transfer property of the congregation only after having been duly authorized by the members of the congregation at a duly convened congregational business meeting. Announcement of the proposed transaction shall be given at the regular church service two (2) Sundays before the meeting. All contracts, notes, mortgages, conveyances, assignments, leases, releases and other papers and documents in behalf of the congregation shall be executed by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman and attested by either the Secretary or Treasurer.

VII:2. In the event of a division, those persons who differ with the Statement of Faith in Article II or any other provisions of this Constitution shall withdraw from membership. They shall have no right or claim to the property or assets of this corporation.

VII:3. In the event that the members vote to dissolve this church corporation, distribution of all assets and property of the corporation shall be made in accordance with Article III, last paragraph, of this organization's Articles of Incorporation. Preference shall be given to the following organizations, in sequence shown, if they qualify under the then existing laws and are in agreement with Article II of this Constitution at that time:

- (a) The Eastern District Association of the Evangelical Free Church of America (IRS #41-0721672N).
- (b) The Evangelical Free Church of America (IRS #41-0721672N).
- (c) Another religious organization meeting the above criteria.

ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at the Annual Meeting by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of votes cast, provided said proposed amendments have been presented in writing and discussed at a congregational business meeting at least three (3) months prior to the time of the Annual Meeting. Article II of this Constitution can only be amended, substituted or its content changed by a unanimous vote of the members present at the Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE IX: BY-LAWS

This congregation shall have the power to adopt, upon a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the votes cast by the members present at a congregational business meeting, an initial set of By-Laws implementing the provisions of this Constitution. All future amendments, substitutions and deletion to the By-Laws shall be governed by the By-Laws.



By-Laws

OF THE CARLISLE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

PREAMBLE

We, the members of this congregation of the Evangelical Free Church of America, do hereby commit and voluntarily submit ourselves to the following By-Laws:

ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

A. The following procedure shall govern the application and acceptance into membership:

- 1.** Application shall be made to the Elders. Applicants must be twelve (12) years of age or older.
- 2.** Applicant(s) shall attend classes on church doctrine and practice to be taught by the Pastor or Elders.
- 3.** All applicants for membership are expected to accept and adhere to this Constitution and By-Laws. Any person whose actions, lifestyle or commitments contradict this Constitution and By-Laws will not be eligible for membership.
- 4.** The Elders shall arrange a meeting with the applicant(s) who shall give an oral testimony of conversion and personal faith, whereupon the Elders shall have the liberty of questioning the applicant(s) relative to doctrine and Christian experience. The Elders shall vote in the absence of the applicant(s). Upon the Elders' approval, a list of those approved for membership shall be placed in the church bulletin for two (2) Sundays. Members of the church have the authority to review and approve the list of applicants. If no objections are expressed by the membership, the Elder-approved applicants will become members upon their public reception.
- 5.** Should a church member object to an Elder-approved applicant for membership, said member shall state the reason to the Elders who shall investigate the objection and reconsider the applicant. If circumstances warrant it, a congregational business meeting will be called to make a final determination regarding membership for the applicant in question.
- 6.** The accepted applicant(s) shall be publicly received into membership at one of the congregation's Sunday services.
- 7.** Should any member of this congregation submit his or her resignation to church for reasons other than moving away, said resignation shall not be acted upon until two (2) Elders and a Pastor have met with said member.
- 8.** Memberships shall expire each January and may be renewed by signing the Reaffirmation of Commitment statement. This constitutes a reconfirmation of the original membership vows. Members, who do not sign the Reaffirmation by February 1, will be placed on the inactive list. If the Reaffirmation is not signed within the calendar year, the Elders, after inquiry, shall have the right to recommend at a congregational business meeting that such members be removed from the membership list. Those removed from membership may, after meeting with the Elders, be approved for membership once again.

B. It shall be the duty of every member to loyally and faithfully attend the services of the church and seek to faithfully fulfill his/her personal Christian obligations in the community in order that Article III of the Constitution may be realized. Through the principle of personal and consistent support according to I Corinthians 16, each member, according to his/her ability, shall support the congregation in its ministry of a worldwide outreach for Jesus Christ.

C. If a member wishes to unite with another congregation, he/she may, upon written request, receive a letter of recommendation from this church. This letter of recommendation from the Elders shall be given upon request to any member who leaves the church in good standing.

D. All members of the Pastoral Staff and their spouses and all Ministry Directors shall become members of this congregation upon assuming their positions, and shall be released from membership upon termination of service.

ARTICLE II: DISCIPLINE

A. Should any member by a sinful and ungodly life, or by heresy, bring dishonor upon or be an offense to Christ and the Church, such membership may be terminated by the members at a congregational business meeting, upon recommendation of the Elder Board. However, he or she shall first be dealt with in a loving and Christian spirit according to Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1-2; Titus 3:10-11; and I Timothy 5:19-22, so that he or she may be restored to the will of God.

B. A member whose membership was so terminated because of a sinful life may be readmitted under Article I of these By-Laws, when evidence is shown that he or she has been restored and is living in fellowship with God.

C. Members who absent themselves from church services and fail to fulfill their Reaffirmation of Commitment pledge, may (after an appropriate time) be placed on an inactive list by the Elder Board. Should this inactive position be maintained for one year, the Elder Board, after inquiry, shall have the right to recommend at a congregational business meeting that such members be removed from the membership list.

ARTICLE III: LEADERS: THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

A. Pastors must be men who have experienced the saving grace of God, and be of established and irreproachable Christian character. They must have the ability to proclaim and expound the Word of God and execute the duties of a Pastor in every way.

B. All other Elders and Ministry Staff shall be members and of established Christian character and reputation.

ARTICLE IV: LEADERS

A. The Elder Board shall consist of not less than five (5) men nor more than ten percent (10%) of the active membership when the active membership exceeds fifty (50) persons. These men will be elected at the Annual Meeting for a term of three (3) years. Their terms will be staggered, with one-third (1/3) of their number being elected each year. They may be reelected. The Senior Pastor and one (1) other Pastor, whom the Elder Board will select, shall be ex-officio members of the Elder Board. The Board may function with less than five (5) elected men only if approved at a congregational business meeting. Such approval shall expire at the time of the next Annual Meeting.

B. Because of qualification requirements, all nominations for the Elder Board will be made from among active members by a nominating committee. The nominating committee for the Elder Board will present all names of prospective Elders to the Elder Board for their comments before approaching them. The nominating committee shall present a list of all nominees to the congregation not less than two (2) Sundays prior to the Annual Meeting.

C. Should a vacancy on the Elder Board occur, the Board is authorized to appoint someone to fill the vacated position for the remainder of the term, should it deem such action appropriate.

D. A nominating committee of two (2) current Elders and two (2) other spiritually mature active members of the congregation shall be elected by the congregation at least two (2) months prior to the annual meeting. The Senior Pastor will be an ex-officio member of this committee. If there is no Senior Pastor, the Chairman of the Elder Board may replace him.

E. The Elder Board shall present a recommended slate of candidates for the nominating committee to the congregation at least two (2) Sundays before the election. Nominations of people who have been contacted and agreed to serve will be accepted from the floor. Each active member present may cast four (4) votes, voting for two (2) elders and two (2) other members. The two (2) individuals in each group receiving the most votes will be elected if they receive the votes of at least one-half (1/2) of the qualified ballots cast. If necessary a run-off vote between the top people (one more than the number of open positions) will be taken immediately. The person(s) receiving the most votes for the remaining position(s) will be elected. A vacancy on the nominating committee may be filled by the Elder Board.

F. The Elder Board will be responsible for overseeing all spiritual and physical operations of the church. The Board will assign specific areas of oversight to its members, in line with individual gifts. The corporate officers of the church will be chosen by the Board from among its members.

G. The Elder Board is responsible for the hiring and dismissal of Directors and Pastors (excluding the Senior Pastor). Hiring will be accomplished through a Search Committee comprised of both elders and members of the congregation. The Search Committee will make hiring recommendations to the Elder Board. In the case of dismissal, the supervisor, Senior Pastor, and Elder Board by majority vote, must be in agreement that dismissal is necessary. Other staff will be hired and dismissed by the person to whom they will report with the approval of the Executive Pastor and Senior Pastor. A dismissed staff member may appeal the decision to the Elder Board. The Senior Pastor can only be brought on staff by a seventy-five percent (75%) vote at a congregational business meeting. He can only be relieved of his duties by a majority vote of the congregation at a duly constituted meeting called for that purpose. A quorum of twenty-five percent (35%) of the active voting membership will be necessary to relieve the Senior Pastor. Sixty (60) days (or a mutually agreed upon time) notice shall be given in case of the resignation of a Pastor or Director. In the event a Pastor or Director is removed, severance arrangements will be determined by the Elder Board.

H. It is the duty of the Elder Board to provide servant-leadership to the church in line with Mark 10:42-45. It is the duty of the congregation to recognize those who have the spiritual qualifications of I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1: 5-9, and to function with the Elder Board as part of the Body of Christ . . . each individual using his/her gifts to help others to grow to spiritual maturity.

ARTICLE V: MEETINGS

A. Church services shall be held on Sundays. Additional meetings may be decided upon by the Elder Board.

B. Communion services shall be held at times established by the Elder Board. Communion services are open to all Christians who are in fellowship with the Lord.

C. Congregational business meetings shall be held annually, when deemed necessary by the Elder Board and at such other times as determined by section (2) below. Voting members shall be members of the congregation eighteen 18 years of age and older.

1. A quorum consisting of twenty-five percent (25%) of the active voting membership or twenty (20) active voting members shall be necessary to conduct any business meeting. A two-thirds (2/3) vote shall be required for passage of any motion.

2. Special congregational business meetings may be called when fifteen (15) members so request and submit a signed petition to the Elder Board.

3. All congregational business meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

4. Minutes from congregational business meetings shall be approved as follows: The Secretary of the Elder Board shall take minutes and present them to the Elders for approval. Elder-approved minutes shall then be posted in the lobby of the church. If there is no feedback from the congregation after three weeks, the minutes shall stand approved. If feedback is provided to a member of the Elders within three (3) weeks of posting, the Elders will consider such feedback and repost the minutes. This process will continue until the minutes stand approved.

5. The election of Elders shall take place at the Annual Meeting to be held in September. Each nominee shall be voted upon individually by secret ballot. A two-thirds (2/3) vote shall be required for approval. Newly elected Elders [They] shall take office the first Sunday of October.

6. For all congregational business meetings written notice shall be placed in the church bulletin at least ten (10) days before such meetings.

ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENTS

Amendments to these By-Laws can only be made at a congregational business meeting. The proposed By-Laws must have been properly presented at a previous congregational business meeting and recorded in the minutes thereof at least twenty-one (21) days before the vote to adopt. A three-fourths (3/4) majority of votes cast is necessary to amend the By-Laws.

ARTICLE VII: POLICY AND PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS

The Policy and Philosophy Statements of the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church constitute an official supplement to these By-Laws. Procedures governing the amendment of these By-Laws shall also apply to the Policy and Philosophy Statements. The Policy and Philosophy Statements are not to conflict with or undermine this Constitution and By-Laws.

Policy & Philosophy Statements

OF THE CARLISLE EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- A. Distinctives
- B. Fellowship Covenant
- C. Reaffirmation of Commitment
- D. Spiritual Gifts
- E. Church Discipline
- F. Security of the Believer
- G. Finances

II. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

- A. Congregationalism
- B. Church Organization and Operation
- C. Role of the Senior Pastor
- D. Role of Elder
- E. Role of Women in the Church

III. ORDINANCES

- A. Baptism
- B. Communion
- C. Dedication of Children
- D. Anointings

IV. CHURCH FUNCTIONS

- A. Sunday Morning Worship Service
- B. Adult Ministries
- C. Christian Education: Children and Youth
- D. Missions, Evangelism and Local Outreach

V. ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE FAMILY

- A. Pastoral Counseling
- B. Marriage
- C. Divorce and Remarriage
- D. Sexual Sin
- E. The Sanctity of Human Life

VI. OTHER ISSUES

- A. Free Will and Divine Choice
- B. Politics
- C. Racism
- D. Materialism
- E. The New Age Movement
- F. Freemasonry and Other Secret Lodges

I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. DISTINCTIVES

The Carlisle Evangelical Free Church heartily embraces the distinctive of the Evangelical Free Church of America as put forth in the booklet "This Is the Evangelical Free Church." Our vision is All of Life for Christ. We desire to follow Christ with our whole heart wherever we are. We want to glorify God through building up the saints, and reaching the unsaved with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We endeavor to teach biblically sound doctrine to train and equip believers while helping them to discover their God given spiritual gifts and ministries. We want the CEFC to be a relevant force in the world not an irrelevant fortress from the world. We passionately seek a spirit of humility and servant hood on the part of all who come here. We long to be the healing hands of Jesus Christ that brings wholeness and meaning to lives that are broken and lost.

B. THE FELLOWSHIP COVENANT

Having been led by the Holy Spirit to unite with this local church, we do now solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one Body in Christ, to walk worthily of the vocation wherewith we are called.

Therefore we propose to manifest that we are Christ's disciples by:

- Acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and giving him pre-eminence as Head of the Body in all that we do, and to pattern our lives after his;
- Walking together in Christian love;
- Engaging to watch over one another in brotherly love, remembering each other in prayer.
- Bearing one another's burdens;
- Being slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation and, mindful of the words of our Savior, to secure it without delay;
- Promoting the prosperity and spirituality of this church;
- Sustaining its worship, ordinances and discipline, and doctrine;
- Contributing cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry;
- Maintaining as far as possible family and personal devotions;
- Teaching our children the Christian truths;
- Seeking the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;
- Walking circumspectly in the world;
- Being just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, exemplary in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior;
- Cultivating Christian sympathy in feeling, and courtesy of speech;
- Purposing that when we remove from this fellowship, we will as soon as possible unite with another church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

C. REAFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENT

I hereby reaffirm my membership in and commitment to the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church and its Constitution, By-Laws, Fellowship Covenant, and Policy and Philosophy Statements. Specifically, I promise, to the best of my ability and with the Spirit's enabling:

1. To grow in Biblical truth and depth of relationship with Christ;
2. To participate in the life of the church;
3. To pray regularly for this work;
4. To use my gifts to further the Lord's work;
5. To support the CEFC financially; and
6. To promote love, acceptance, forgiveness, and unity.

Date _____

Signed _____

Please Print Name

D. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God has graciously bestowed upon each believer at the moment of salvation special talents or abilities called spiritual gifts. Each believer possesses at least one gift and often more than one. (Rom. 12:3; I Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-8; Heb. 2:4; I Pet. 4:10). The CEFC encourages all believers to make maximum use of the gift(s) which God has given to them. It is imperative to discover these gifts, cultivate them, and put them to use for His glory. Only as Christians use their gifts will they know the fullness of joy in the Lord (Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor.12:15-16; Eph. 4:11-14; II Tim. 1:6; I Pet. 4:10-11). We believe, however, that the manifestation of these gifts must follow the teaching and authority of scripture.

We accept the possibility that we are living in the end times. In light of the scriptural promise that God would pour out His Spirit over all the earth during that period, the manifestation of signs and wonders would not seem surprising.

The great tension within the Church today regarding spiritual gifts relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. We hold that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit at the time of their conversion. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not some special experience for one segment of the Church or a group of "in", elite, super-Christians. It is an action of God at the time of conversion by which each believer is placed into the Body of Christ--His Church. "You are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ...have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27). "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (I Cor.12:13).

We reject the doctrine of a "second" baptism of the Holy Spirit (i.e., a baptism of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion). It is when we receive Christ as our personal Savior and Lord that the Holy Spirit baptizes individuals into the Lord Jesus Christ. Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to be baptized with the Spirit. There is no exhortation to receive the Holy Spirit in some spectacular second work of grace. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience to be sought as a Christian (I Cor.11:4; Eph. 4:5). We do believe in an ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit that we can diligently pursue and give attention to.

Although we receive all of the Holy Spirit's glorious Person at conversion, we are told to "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). That is, we are admonished to let the indwelling Holy Spirit control us, to take complete possession of our total self, to produce and live out the glorious resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ within us. The tense of the Greek verb indicates that this is to be continuous, literally: "Be constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 6:13; 8:1-14; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:30; 5:9-11; I Thess. 5:19).

In summary, all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ being recipients of His finished work on their behalf, have already been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ and have become one with Him. That having been accomplished at conversion, believers are told to be constantly turning total control of their lives over to the Holy Spirit who indwells them. To be filled is to be controlled, and while there is only one baptism, there are many fillings.

In the final analysis, all that is said and done must be scriptural, edifying to the body, and glorifying to God. We recognize all manifestations of the Holy Spirit that clearly exalt Jesus Christ, and Him alone (I Cor.14:26, 33, 40; Eph. 4:12-13; I Pet. 4:11). Also see Rom. 12, I Cor. 12-14, and Eph. 4.

E. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The success and health of any social unit depends upon internal harmony and unity. Discord, violations of basic rules and ethics, and breaches of faithfulness, trust, and goodwill pose a serious threat to a family, a marriage, an organization and especially to a church.

Christ's Church is to be characterized by love, holiness, peace, and purity. Biblical standards of purity, humility, service, and faithfulness, in the areas of personal and corporate living are expected. The local body is to be under the authority of the Word of God and its spiritual leaders, that is, the Pastoral Staff and the Elders. Everyone is to be accountable to one another.

Since the spiritual welfare of the body is to be a high priority of everyone, the church must accept a pattern of holy living and exercise loving discipline when biblical standards are willfully violated. When such a violation occurs, we are to follow the steps Christ has given in Matthew 18 with prayer, compassion and humility:

- 1.** The person offended must go to the offender without needless delay and confront that person in love and gentleness (Gal. 6:1). The offended person is to go alone, after sincere prayer and an examination of his/her own spirit and motives, without sharing or consulting with anyone else. It is a private matter at this point.
- 2.** If step one is ineffective in resolving the problem, the offended person should prayerfully seek out one or two spiritually mature and appropriate witnesses and return to the offender in love.
- 3.** If step two fails to resolve the issue in a biblical way, the matter should then be brought to the attention of the Elder Board. The Elders will then assume responsibility for the resolution of the problem.
- 4.** If the Elders are unsuccessful in resolving the matter, it will be brought before the church membership. All the facts will be presented with appropriate documentation. The Board of Elders shall recommend a biblical plan of action. This could involve reprimand, termination of membership, and possible public censure.

The goal of all church discipline is restoration. The process of church discipline should honor and glorify God, maintain holiness and purity within the local church, promote internal harmony and peace, cultivate an abhorrence of sin and condemn all that dishonors God. We would rather restore lovingly than remove judgmentally.

F. THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER

We believe that the eternal security of the believer comes as a result of God's grace through the believer's individual act of faith focused on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. We believe that salvation is the guaranteed gift of God to anyone who places their full trust in Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice for their sins. This belief is based upon the cooperative efforts of the Triune God and therefore assures the believer of God's unconditional love, complete and full acceptance as His child, and the unlimited forgiveness of his or her sins for eternity (Gen. 3:15; John 3:14-18, 36; Acts 13:38, 39; Eph. 1:7, 8; 2:1-10; Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21-26; 10:9-10; Col. 1:19, 20; Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:11-14, 22; 10:1-14; I Cor. 12:12; Eph. 1:13, 14; I Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:1, 2, 9-12; John 7:37-39; II Cor. 5:5).

It is important in the discussion of the doctrine of eternal security to be sensitive to several areas of the Christian life which are most influenced by our understanding of this Biblical truth: 1) the problem of sin in the life of a professing believer, 2) the issue of one's sense of assurance that a believer may or may not have regarding his or her personal salvation, and 3) certain passages of Scripture which seem to contradict or in fact, oppose the doctrine altogether.

The security of the believer is not a 'license to sin.' Salvation is a call to a holy and devoted life which seeks to avoid temptation to sin and live a life which is pleasing to God and a testimony to a changed life in Christ (Eph. 4:17, 5:11; I Th. 4:3-5; I Pet. 1:13, 2:3). While we realize that the believer will not be totally freed from the influences of sin in this world until he or she receives their glorified body, we are challenged by Scripture to not deliberately subject ourselves to sin or to think that we are not susceptible to sin (I John 2:29, 3:3; Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 10:11-13; Prov. 28:14). The Bible makes it clear that while we are to seek to live a life devoted to following Christ we will still sin, yet this does not void the covenant that we have with God through Christ for our eternal salvation. We are however, commanded to confess our sins, not to avoid the loss of our salvation but that we would not inhibit our fellowship with God (I John 1:5, 2:2; Titus 2:11-14; Rom. 8:34-39; Heb. 4:14-16; I Cor. 6:11-20).

When we speak of the 'believer's assurance' of salvation we are referring to that understanding, confidence, or personal trust that the believer might have regarding their own state of salvation. We are told in Hebrews 10:22: "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith. . ." (NIV) I Timothy 3:13 states: "Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus." (NIV) We are aware of many believers throughout the Scriptures who struggled with a personal assurance of their salvation: Moses, Exodus 33:12-18; David, Psalms 51; Elijah, I Kings 19:3-5; Jeremiah, Jeremiah 20:7-18; the Apostle Paul, II Corinthians 1:8. We believe that God allows us to go through times of trials and even despair that we might put our trust in Him, learn to persevere in order to grow, and realize that our salvation is not based on our feelings or performance but solely on the finished work of Christ on the cross. Therefore, a believer may have a full knowledge and understanding of the doctrine of eternal security yet still struggle at times with their own sense of assurance (James 1:2-8; Romans 5:1-5; I Peter 1:3-9).

There are a number of passages that people refer to when the question of eternal security arises, some of these are: Hebrews 6:4-12; 10:26-31; and Matthew 12:30-32. It should be remembered that in studying any passage of Scripture we need to ask the following questions: To whom was the passage originally intended? What was their spiritual state at the time of the writing? What is the overall theme of the book in which the passage appears? And finally, how does the passage apply today? The Book of Hebrews was originally written to those who questioned the deity and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They still looked to the Old Testament forms of the Law and the sacrificial system. The writer of Hebrews warns them repeatedly that if they rejected Christ and His sacrifice or if they intellectually accepted His sacrifice but lived as the unbelieving world there no longer was any other sacrifice available for their sins. Some have interpreted these passages to apply to believers today. They cannot because of the difference in the understanding and interpretation that the original recipients of the Book of Hebrews had of the Old Testament. Similarly, in the Matthew 12 passage, Jesus was speaking to unbelievers who rejected His deity and His miracles, both of which were confirmed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was warning them that if they rejected the witness of the Holy Spirit they would never be forgiven. This was the equivalent of the sin of unbelief. This is true today; if people refuse to believe and accept the promptings of the Holy Spirit to accept Christ as their Savior they cannot be saved. However, if a person is saved they have already received the Holy Spirit and are one of God's children eternally (John 1:12, 13; 3:5-8; 7:37-39; Romans 8:5-17 Ephesians 1:13, 14).

G. FINANCES

The CEFC observes a formal collection of tithes and offerings each Sunday morning. Offering boxes are also located in the church. All who attend are encouraged to support this work financially. The Scripture tells us: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

We believe that careful stewardship is required of all of us. While this is a highly personal and individual matter, it is our view that a budgeting procedure, a commitment to simple living, and a regular offering to the Lord of a fixed percentage of one's income is conducive to proper stewardship (1 Cor. 16:1-2). We view a tithe (one-tenth) as a bench mark for our giving (Mal. 3:8-12) but we do not believe we are bound by any particular percentage. In light of our riches in Christ and the fact that all of our wealth belongs to God, we should abound in generosity.

It is the policy of this church to avoid going into debt. We believe that this represents God's best for us. However, we accept the fact that borrowing is sometimes desirable and Scripture does permit it. The Committee consists of the Treasurer, Executive Pastor (who serves as the Chairperson), the Financial Secretary, the Chairperson of the Trustee Board, and an elected at-large person (preferably a CEFC member who is not on a board or committee.)

It is the responsibility of the Budget/Finance Committee to see that a budget is prepared. The Committee will prepare a proposed budget in August. This budget will be submitted to the Elder Board for their input, which will be reviewed by the Committee. The Budget/Finance Committee will then make the proposed budget available (with changes) to the congregation for their consideration and input. This will be done at least two Sundays before the business meeting at which a secret ballot vote by the CEFC membership on this budget will take place. This budget, once approved, will serve as a guideline for expenditures in the coming year. It is the job of the Budget/Finance Committee to monitor expenditures in light of the budgetary guidelines. Serious deviations from the budget must be approved by the Budget/Finance Committee.

It is the responsibility of the Executive Pastor to see that a financial review of the church's financial records is done every other year. The Executive Pastor, after consultation with the Budget/Finance Committee, shall offer the names of appropriate individuals to do the financial review to the Elder Board.

All expenditures by the CEFC are viewed as being undertaken by one of its boards or committees. Individual boards or committees may approve expenditures that are not specifically listed in their budget of up to \$500. The Elder Board may approve expenditures of up to half a percent (0.5%) of the budget. Amounts over half a percent (0.5%) of the budget must be approved by the Budget/Finance Committee. The Budget/Finance Committee may approve expenditures of up to one percent (1.0%) of the budget. All of the aforementioned expenditures should fall within the general budget of the particular board or committee. If they do not, the Elder Board must also approve them. Amounts over one percent (1.0%) of the budget that are not specifically in the budget must be presented to the membership for approval. The Elder Board must approve expenditures that fall outside of the existing budget. These expenditures may not exceed five percent of the budget in their entirety for the fiscal year.

Persons who give cash and desire a record of their giving must identify themselves by placing the offering in an envelope marked with their name. Persons who give by check do not need to use envelopes since they are identified by the check. A receipt for all identified giving will be prepared by the Financial Secretary for all who give. These receipts will be available in January.

It is the philosophy of the CEFC that all giving be directed to the general fund or to one of the special funds. Expenditures for CEFC's various ministries will be reflected in the annual budget. The CEFC will attempt to minimize special offerings and to limit fund-raising projects and requests. Any offering or fund-raising activity must be authorized by the Elder Board. When payments are made for goods or services [the collection box can also be employed.] These monies are considered pass-through funds. They typically involve payment for dinners, socials, recreation, Bibles, tapes, books, etc. These payments are not considered charitable giving and are not tax-deductible. If they are made in cash they should be placed in an envelope and properly marked. If pass-through payments are made by check, indication should be made as to what the payment is for. This will prevent credit being given for charitable giving when these payments are made. These payments will not be included on the year-end receipt.

The CEFC maintains a Mercy Ministry fund to aid people with financial and material needs. While individuals both within and without the congregation may be helped, priority is given to those in the CEFC body. A separate Mercy Ministry policy governs the distribution of this aid.

Giving to the CEFC may be designated for any of its various funds or special projects. All undesignated giving goes to the general fund. Giving may also be designated for individuals. Designated giving to specific missionaries through the CEFC is encouraged only when the CEFC calls for a special offering for that purpose. Those who wish to support specific missionaries are encouraged to do so on their own through the appropriate mission organizations.

Designated giving to other individuals must meet a legitimate financial need. The CEFC will not accept gifts designated for family members or relatives of the donor. It should be understood that all offerings to the CEFC come under its control. The church is not bound to make any gift or transfer of funds. If the Elders feel that the above conditions cannot be satisfied, gifts designated for individuals will be returned to the donor. All designated giving to individuals to meet personal needs will be handled through the helps fund. (These funds are considered a gift by the Internal Revenue Service and the recipient does not have to pay taxes on them. Unless it represents a special project of the CEFC, gifts to designated individuals are not tax deductible. Undesignated gifts to the helps fund are tax deductible.)

In order to insure good stewardship and prevent conflicts of interest from taking place, the following procedures will govern the purchase of goods or services by the CEFC:

- 1.** If an individual who attends the CEFC is also an owner or an employee of a business that intends to sell its product(s) or services to the CEFC, and if this individual may benefit directly or indirectly from this sale, and if the total amount exceeds \$1,500, then details of the proposed purchase must be published in the bulletin at least fifteen days before the transaction is to take place.
- 2.** Individuals may voice concerns to the appropriate board or committee. After consultation with the Church Chairman, the chairperson of the particular board or committee may refer the matter to the Elder Board for their decision.

Boards or committees may pay for services as they deem it appropriate. These expenditures must fall within their budget, represent a legitimate need, and create no conflicts of interest.

II. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

A. CONGREGATIONALISM

We believe that the congregational form of church government best reflects the biblical pattern of the early church. The basis for membership at the CEFC is a saving relationship with Jesus Christ and we believe that each member, gifted by God, is to minister to others. The collective membership, under the headship of Christ, is the ultimate authority in decision making.

Since CEFC is led by Elders and the day-to-day ministry of the church is overseen by the Staff, not every decision will come to the entire congregation. The decisions which must come to the congregation for a vote are:

- Issues of membership as articulated by the By-Laws
- Selection of Elders (includes selection of a Nominating Committee)
- Hiring and dismissal of Senior Pastor
- Approval or amending the Constitution or By-Laws (includes Policy & Philosophy Statements)
- Approval of church budget
- Approval of building projects and major capital campaigns
- Receipt and disposal of real, personal or mixed property requiring formal legal action
- Dissolution of CEFC

References: Ephesians 1:22-23; I Peter 2:5, 9; I Corinthians 6:19; I Thessalonians 4:9; I Timothy 3; Titus 1

B. CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

- The Elder Board and the Nominating Committee are elected by the membership.
- Normally, three people comprise each structure. Appointments will be made as needed.
- Women may be appointed to all structures but the Elder Board and may serve as Chairpersons. They may not serve as Pastors.
- Elders, the Chairperson of the Trustee Board, and the Financial Secretary must be members of the CEFC.
- Staff consists of Associate and Assistant Pastors plus paid Ministry Directors.

C. THE ROLE OF THE SENIOR PASTOR

The Senior Pastor is called by the congregation and assumes the position of Pastor/Teacher. As an Elder he serves on the Elder Board and works with the Elders overseeing the ministry of the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church. As the head shepherd, he is a leader among equals on the Elder Board. His responsibilities are: (1) preaching and teaching, (2) discipling and mentoring the leadership of the church in co-operation with the Pastoral Staff and the Elder Board, (3) to be available for crisis situations along with the Pastoral Staff, Elder Board, Deacons and members of the Adult Bible Fellowships, (4) pre-marital counseling, and, (5) to be personally involved in the community modeling the church's purpose statement, as the Spirit leads.

We do not accept the traditional view of the Senior Pastor which sees the routine duties of his office as visiting every member or visitor, overseeing and administrating all the organizational tasks, facility concerns and/or functions of the church, or attending and serving as an ex officio member of committees or boards of the church. The Senior Pastor is, however, free to participate in these ministries as the Lord leads him to do so. These tasks and ministries are the responsibility of those in the local body who are appropriately gifted and equipped for such ministries and any additional staff that may be hired by the church for the "equipping of the saints to do the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12).

The Senior Pastor is free from this traditional role in order that he might dedicate himself to "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). This ministry requires that the Senior Pastor give himself to the intense study of the Word, cultivating his personal relationship with the Lord, growing in godliness. He must be prepared "in season and out of season" to preach and teach the Word of God, provide biblical direction and doctrinal instruction, and to do so in patience, love, and devotion to the flock that God has placed him over as shepherd (I Timothy 2:2; Colossians 1:28,29; I Timothy 4:12-16; 6:11,12; II Timothy 2:15; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:3-11; 3:3-11; I John 2:15-17).

He is to preach and teach the Scriptures and thus equip the people of God in the Body for the work of the ministry. He will seek to work through and with the leadership who will in turn disciple and equip the local church to minister to one another and reach their community as set forth in the CEFC purpose statement.

Above all the Senior Pastor is to manage his own family and love his wife as Christ loved the Church, that he might be a role model for the Body of Christ. He is to identify mature leaders in the church with whom he will enter into a relationship of mutual accountability for their personal lives, families and ministries.

Note: For clarifications of the role of the Senior Pastor, see the Senior Pastoral Agreement.

D. THE ROLE OF THE ELDER'S

The role of Elder is to be the shepherd of God's Flock and to live "All of Life for Christ". Elders are to teach Biblical truth (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17), model Christ-like behavior (1 Peter 5:1-3), warn and discipline disorderly believers (1 Thess. 5:14; Titus 3:10), pray for the physically sick and spiritually struggling (James 5:13-16), and oversee the people and affairs of God's church (1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 6:1-4; Titus 1:7).

Elders should be:

- Above reproach – Having a good reputation
- Husband of but one wife – Maintaining moral purity
- Temperate – Exemplifying balance in word and action
- Prudent- Being wise and humble
- Respectable – Serving as a good role model
- Hospitable – Demonstrating unselfishness and generosity
- Able to teach – Communicating sensitively and in a nonthreatening way
- Not given to wine – Not being addicted to substances
- Not self-willed – Not being a self-centered and controlling personality
- Not quick-tempered – Void of anger that becomes sinful
- Not pugnacious – Not an abusive person
- Uncontentious – Non-argumentative and non-divisive
- Gentle – A sensitive, loving and kind person
- Free from the love of money – Non-materialistic
- One who manages his household well – A good husband and father
- A good reputation – A good testimony to unbelievers
- Love what is good – Pursuing Godly activities
- Just – Wise, discerning, non-prejudiced and fair
- Devout – Holy and righteous
- Not a new Christian (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)

E. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

We do not undertake the responsibility of creating a policy on the role of women in the church lightly. Too often this issue had been an occasion for division and hurt. Our desire is not to create a barrier for fellowship, but to put a policy in place that will guide the practice and teaching at Carlisle Evangelical Free Church.

We understand Scripture to teach that God values men and women equally (Gal. 3:28). Our value as people comes from the fact that God created us in His image, not from our gender or our roles in ministry (Gen. 1:27).

We understand Scripture to teach that two roles in the church are reserved for men. The Elders of the church are to be men (I Tim. 3:1-7). The role of Senior Pastor is to be male because of the teaching role that position carries in the worship service (I Tim. 2:12). The church By-Laws further specify that all those with the title of Pastor shall be men (Article III A). With the exception of Pastor and Elder, all roles are open to women. Specifically, we recognize that women have served an important teaching role in the church (Titus 2:3). In fact, the Bible recognizes that women have instructed men (Acts 18:26; II Tim. 1:5). But the role of teacher in a worship service is one we believe to be reserved for men (I Tim. 2:12). This means we will continue to welcome women into all teaching roles except that of delivering a message in a worship service.

Women and men are equal in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the church even if their roles may differ. We believe all Christians are called to use the gifts God has given them to serve Christ (Eph. 2:10).

As with other policies, we understand that not everyone will agree with our position. We invite all people to join our community and to enter into a discussion on the biblical merits of our policy – not the exchange of personal perspectives or popular opinions – but the sincere attempt to rightly understand and follow the Word of God.

III. ORDINANCES

A. BAPTISM

The Scriptures teach that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross (Rom. 3:21-24, 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9). Baptism, therefore, does not save a person but it is an external sign or testimony of salvation.

For a person to be baptized there must have already been a conscious awareness of their personal sin, an understanding and desire for their own salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, a genuine repentance from sin, and the exercising of their will to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Water baptism is an ordinance to be observed by the Church. While the EFCA believes in water baptism, it does not make it a requirement for church membership. It is our belief that membership in the local church should not be more restrictive than membership in the universal Church, and since belief in Christ is the only requirement for membership in that Church, it should be our only requirement.

The mode of baptism employed by CEFC is immersion unless physical limitations prohibit this. This best symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). While an important ordinance, baptism is not a means of salvation.

Baptismal services will be held as those desiring to be obedient to Christ's commands come forward and present their requests to the Pastors or Elders. There is a mandatory meeting with a Pastor to determine the salvation of the individual and their understanding of this ordinance. All believers are encouraged to seriously consider baptism if they have yet to undergo it.

B. COMMUNION

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance to be observed by believers. The elements (i.e., the bread and cup) are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ. The broken bread reminds us of his broken body. The cup is to symbolize his shed blood. The purpose of the service is to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again. While communion is an important observance, it is not a means of salvation. The Bible warns that those who do not recognize Christ in the elements or partake unworthily, are in danger of judgment (I Cor. 11:28-29). The Bible makes it clear that communion is a celebration to be observed by the Body of Christ, therefore, the CEFC seeks to observe communion on a regular basis.

C. DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

The Scriptures teach that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross (Rom. 3:21-24, 10:9,10; Eph. 2:8, 9). Baptism, therefore, is the external sign or testimony that salvation has already taken place and is an act of the individual's own will (Acts 2:38-41). For a person to be baptized there must have already been a conscious awareness of their personal sin, an understanding and desire for their own salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, a genuine repentance from sin, and the exercising of their will to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. An infant below the age of accountability cannot possibly comprehend these steps of faith for salvation.

The CEFC does not baptize or christen infants. The CEFC recognizes only "believers' baptism." Concerned parents may have their children dedicated. Parents must meet with the Senior Pastor prior to setting a date and must be willing to read appropriate materials. Child dedication constitutes a public proclamation that parents will endeavor to raise their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It also involves a pledge on the part of the body to assist the parents in whatever way possible to achieve this end. Child dedication services are held throughout the year based upon scheduling with the Senior Pastor and the Director of Worship. See the Senior Pastor or an Elder if you are interested in dedicating a child.

D. ANNOINTINGS

Prayer and praise are seen in Scripture to be vital to the people of God. Where they are missing or in short supply, God's glory is compromised and his people are weakened spiritually. Both are commanded in the Word of God. When the people of God are obedient and spiritually healthy, they will be characterized by much prayer and abundant praise.

Suffering should elicit prayer. God's provision and goodness to us in the sharing of His love and life (John 14:6) should call forth praise. James exhorts us, "Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray" (James 5:13). The word "trouble" in Greek relates to suffering from any source. He continues in the same verse, "Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise."

Then he asks, "Is anyone of you sick?" (James 5:14). Much misunderstanding has centered in the response to this question. The verses that follow seem to teach that anointing with oil is the response to physical sickness or illness. The practice of anointing with oil in the name of the Lord out of a literal interpretation of these verses (James 5:13-16), once known only among some devout groups, now seems to be more common. A systematic study of this passage supports neither the Roman Catholic practice of "extreme unction", nor the anointing with literal oil as a ritualistic means to bring about "divine healing" for physical infirmities.

The word "Kamonte" translated "sick" or "sick person" (James 5:15) literally means "to be weary." Thus, James was not strictly referring to the bedfast, the diseased, or physically ill ones. Instead, he was writing to and about those who had grown weary, those who had become weak both emotionally and spiritually in the midst of trial and suffering.

It is those who are weak and weary who are to call for the Elders of the church. The early church leaders were instructed to "encourage the timid and help the weak" (1 Thess. 5:14). They were to pray over the one who, suffering from weariness and weakness, had called for their services. In addition to their collective intercession and prayer, they were to anoint (i.e., rub with oil) the one suffering discouragement, depression and weariness in the Christian walk.

The Greek word for "anointing" does not refer to a ritual or ceremonial anointing. That is an entirely different word in the original. The word in James refers to a common practice in those days of using oil as a means of bestowing honor, refreshment, and grooming.

Thus, James' point is that the "weak" and "weary" would be refreshed, encouraged, and lifted from their despondency by the Elders who rubbed oil on their heads and then prayed for them. The Elders' prayer offered in faith "will make the weary one well" (James 5:15), that is it will restore him/her from discouragement and spiritual defeat "and the Lord will raise him up." An accurate exegesis thus reveals that this passage is primarily talking about emotional and spiritual restoration rather than physical. However, given the great mysteries of psychosomatic illness (i.e., mind-induced bodily illness), we must concede that broken spirits may readily lead to bodily illness. As the Elders bring the power of highly focused prayer, words of loving encouragement, and the literal and symbolic uses of oil, there will be spiritual and emotional restoration which in turn may lead to physical well-being.

The conclusion is clear: "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other" (James 5:16). Make much of praise! Be thankful! A deep mutual concern for each other in the body is the way to combat weariness, discouragement, and spiritual depression. It is the powerful and effective prayer of godly men and women that brings the needed spiritual cure from God.

How shall we as a body move to meet the needs of the discouraged and despondent among us? How shall we encourage more prayer, praise, and endurance?

- 1.** When we see brothers and sisters in time of trouble and suffering let us all pray for them. Pray fervently, as though you were the one suffering.
- 2.** When we ourselves are happy, let us sing praises to God and thus encourage a spirit of joy and gratitude among our brethren. Praise begets praise!
- 3.** When one of our spiritual family is weary or depressed, when one has all but given up in the Christian pilgrimage, when one feels totally useless and insignificant, let him/her call for the Elders of the church. The one experiencing the severe "downers" should take a very important step of faith and call for the Elders. The Elders will come and pray. They will also encourage the individual to examine his/her own heart, and if necessary, to make a confession in the loving presence of this caring, support group. In addition to verbal, spiritual, and emotional oil, the weary one will be anointed in the name of the Lord with literal oil--symbolizing the power of the Holy Spirit working through the body to restore, encourage, and heal. After this time of prayer, praise, confession, reaffirmation, and encouragement, the Elders will claim God's promise for spiritual, emotional, and physical restoration.

We want our spiritual family to be aware of this resource for bringing restoration and encouragement to troubled souls. Please take advantage of this wonderful process of healing and support that God the Father has provided.

IV. CHURCH FUNCTIONS

A. SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

We believe that worship is the act of giving glory to the triune God of the Bible and celebrating his majesty through the employment of musical instruments, song, personal testimonies, drama, dance, prayer, praise, and the exposition and application of God's written Word, the Bible. We believe that worship should encourage

times of adoration of our God, the confession of sins, affirmation of God's love and forgiveness offered through the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, as well as thanksgiving and intercession for the needs of others (I Chronicles 16:19-31; Psalms 29:1,2; 96:7,8; 100; 107:22; Isaiah 38:20; Rom. 3:21-26; I Peter 2:21-25; I John 1:6-10; 4:9-19; Philippians 2:9-11; Psalms 32:5-7; Matthew 10:32,33; Psalm 141:5; Philippians 4:4-8; Rom. 12:15; I Tim 2:1-8; James 5:14-16).

It is our desire to blend both contemporary and traditional forms of worship as they lend themselves to the theme of a particular worship service that they might be encouraging to the worshiper. We recognize that there are varying worship styles and cultural preferences regarding employment of musical instruments, the singing of choruses and/or hymns, and various forms of congregational participation. While we appreciate the value of their diversity and their encouragement in worship we do not believe that cultural preferences or personal tastes are the tests and criteria for determining whether a service is biblically worshipful. We do believe that our worship services must be directed toward the God of the Bible, Christ centered, and led by the Holy Spirit through the lives of the worshipers. We strongly believe that worship is a way of life, and not merely a Sunday morning experience; therefore, while we encourage Sunday morning worship, ultimately our objective is to produce a life-style of worship for all those who participate in our worship services (I Cor.12-14; Acts 2:4-11; I Chronicles 16:29-31; Psalms 2:11,12; Psalm 89; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:9-18; 5:1; 6:2; 10:1-25; 12:1, 2; John 14:16-17, 25, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15; Rom. 8:14-22; Eph. 4:29-32; I Thess. 5:16-24; 5:19-21).

We believe that the implications of our purpose statement influence the structure of any given worship service. "All of Life for Christ" motivates us to invite friends and family as well as the community at large to participate in our morning worship service. This is a practical opportunity, given the schedules and preferences of our culture, to invite our community to share in our worship service. Our Sunday morning approach to worship does not, however, negate our philosophy of being a force in the world. We encourage each believer at CEFC to practice a lifestyle of evangelism to be used by God in winning others to Christ.

We desire to model the ministry of Christ and his Apostles to the multitudes. Therefore, we view the Sunday morning worship at the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church as an opportunity to minister to believers and seekers alike. This requires a distinctive approach in conducting our Sunday morning service. We strive to honor the Biblical characteristics of worship and provide an opportunity for believers to worship the Lord, at the same time we desire to create a suitable atmosphere for those seeking to have a personal relationship with God. This requires that we become more conscious of the use of terminology and traditions that may be more appropriate for our New Community services. Since our objective is to model the ministry of Christ and his Apostles, we are purposefully sensitive to those who are seeking to enter into a personal relationship with Him. We desire to accomplish this objective while ministering to the needs of the followers of Christ (Matt.13:34-36; Luke 8:4-18; Acts 2:41-47 cp. 3:1-21; 5:16-21a).

B. ADULT MINISTRIES

1. Small Groups' ministries are not an option to the spiritual life of the church or the believer. They are a natural aspect of Christian maturity. Small groups are found throughout Scriptures from Moses, meeting with the leaders of Israel in the presence of the Lord (Exodus 24), to the disciples in a small group setting with Christ and the many references to smaller groups of people meeting in homes to worship, be disciplined, hold each other accountable and to serve.

As the worship service exists to celebrate God through exaltation, exhortation and evangelization geared to our culture and social context, so small groups exist to fulfill the purpose of developing intimacy and accountability. We learn from the model that Christ gave us that the process of discipleship (transforming a seeker into a fully devoted follower of Christ and a follower into a devoted disciple of Christ) best takes place in the context of small groups.

Realizing that people learn at differing paces and that their spiritual journeys are on different levels, it is the desire of the leadership of CEFC to offer various opportunities for involvement in the small group experience. Never-the-less, each opportunity will stress intimacy, accountability, spiritual growth and service in keeping with the stage of spiritual growth of the group's membership.

It is for this reason that all leadership of the CEFC is encouraged to be active in a small group, to seek to continually be disciplined and to take an active role in the discipleship of others. We believe the spiritual growth of a believer is not merely complemented but is nurtured and matured in a small group setting.

In order to encourage the continuity and spiritual consistency of the small groups' ministries the leadership requires that the leaders of small groups fulfill a training process which includes an apprentice program and classroom instruction. Trainers of apprentices are themselves required to continue in a discipleship relationship in a small group setting during the training of their apprentice.

A small group shall be comprised of approximately six (6) to seventeen (17) people and shall focus on a variety of topics but always with the purpose of transforming seekers into followers of Christ and followers of Christ into devoted disciples of Christ. Small groups will generally last for the same calendar year as the adult education program and the participants are encouraged to choose new people to begin a new group with the philosophy of dividing and multiplying. Small group members are encouraged to reach out to those not in a small group. The Small Group Committee will seek to develop appropriate small groups to meet the needs of those outside of the Small Groups' ministry program. Ideally, small groups will be led by those individuals who have completed the small groups classroom instruction and the apprentice training. However, all leaders and small groups will be accountable to the Small Group Committee. Anyone interested in participating in an existing small group or forming a new small group should speak with the Small Group Committee.

- 2.** Women's Ministry offers activities throughout the year where women are welcome to invite friends. Opportunities include Bible studies, retreats, conferences, quiet times and special gatherings.
- 3.** Men's Ministry encourages men come together to enjoy fellowship, to pray and hear speakers who tackle issues that men face on a daily basis. Men also attend local and national events together.
- 4.** Young Adult Ministry is for High school graduates to the age of mid 30's They meet Sunday mornings at 9:30 am and periodically for special events.
- 5.** Senior Adult Ministry (SAM's) meets the second Thursday of each month during the school year for special speakers & fellowship while reaching out to others in the community.
- 6.** Mother's of Preschoolers (MOPS) meets twice per month on Wednesday mornings during the school year. This ministry is a great opportunity for mothers of younger children to find friendship, community, resources and support.
- 7.** Open Arms Ministry Support Group is a Christ-centered ministry for those at CEFC, and in the wider community, who are caring for children or adults with special needs.

C. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Christian education is the Christ centered, Bible based, and Holy Spirit empowered teaching/learning process that attempts: (1) to guide individuals at various levels of growth into a life-changing experience with Jesus Christ that results in salvation, and (2) to equip and nurture these believers through teachers who model and articulate scriptural truth, behavior, attitudes, and skills which produce students who exhibit a growing relationship with God, characterized by a deep love and dependence on Him. The basic goal, therefore, of Christian education is to provide a climate in which Christians will come to maturity in Jesus Christ, and through God's grace, demonstrate Christ like obedience to his will.

The central location for Christian education is the home. Moses' powerful final exhortations to Israel regarding parental responsibilities for educating one's children in Deut. 4:9 and 6:1-25 are reiterated in Eph. 6:4. In addition to the home, the ministry of Christians to each other within the church setting remains one of great importance. Acts 2:42-47 informs us that we are to worship, be instructed, and engage in meaningful Christian fellowship.

Christian education in the local church is not bits and pieces of various programs, but a carefully designed package of educational activities which together help build the body of Christ. In the CEFC, this would regularly consist of Sunday School, Wednesday evening programming, house churches, the Sunday morning message, and Children's Church. In addition, there are other events such as retreats, Vacation Bible School, workshops and seminars which afford special opportunities for growth and development. The CEFC also owns Christian videos which are available for use in the home at no charge.

Parents should consider very seriously their responsibility to educate their children in the ways of the Lord. This is first and foremost an undertaking that is to take place in the home. Fathers and mothers are to be teachers of the Word as well as role models of Christ centered living. The CEFC stands ready and waiting to supplement these basic efforts. Parents should avail themselves of all the CEFC has to offer by way of instruction. They should realize that they will be held accountable for the effort they make in raising their children to know and love the Lord.

The CEFC encourages everyone to make the most of the resources and opportunities that are available to them to further their Christian education. Christians who are ignorant of the Bible and the ways of God will never build strong churches nor have lasting impact on their world. We are commanded to grow in biblical truth and we should endeavor to allow the Holy Spirit to renew and transform our minds through study. In an increasingly secular and godless world we need to program our minds with divine truth. Study to show thyself approved!

D. MISSIONS, EVANGELISM, AND LOCAL OUTREACH

The Scriptures teach that it is the purpose of the church to make disciples of all nations by evangelizing, teaching, and baptizing (Matt. 28:19-20). The CEFC is committed to carrying out this mandate by promoting missions, evangelism, and local outreach. This is the essence of what it means when the church operates as a "force" in the world.

The Missions Committee, comprised of a chairperson appointed by the Staff and the Missions Coordinators has the responsibility: (1) to encourage members of the congregation to consider career and /or short term missionary service, (2) to mature, equip, commission, support, and evaluate those whom God has called to be missionaries - the candidates recommended by the Missions Committee must be approved by the Elder Board, (3) to encourage the prayer support of all people and ministries supported by the CEFC and to provide practical help when needed, (4) to promote "missions awareness" through education, and (5) to conduct a yearly review of each CEFC missionary with the Elder Board.

Recognizing the need to spread the Good News around the world we also recognize the responsibility to reach the community in which we reside -- meeting the needs of those right around us. We seek to fulfill this responsibility through a life-style approach in the daily lives of the CEFC church family as well as actively providing events which are culturally compatible with the people God has given us a vision to reach. These events will be sensitive to the unchurched population and will seek to give our people the opportunity to invite them. The purpose of these events will be to give the unchurched the opportunity to become acquainted with our ministry and the love, acceptance and ultimately the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. These outreach events are to be planned by the church on a regular basis.

The desire is to minister to the whole person -- body, mind and spirit. It is the intention of the CEFC to be the good Samaritan in the greater Carlisle Area. It is not enough to simply preach the gospel. We must demonstrate its veracity and power by living out its demands and thereby earn the right to be heard. We will seek to fulfill this desire while always being sensitive to the culture and the level of spiritual comprehension of those around us.

V. ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE FAMILY

A. PASTORAL COUNSELING

The CEFC recognizes the occasional need of Christians to seek the benefits of Christian counseling. We believe that this counseling must be both biblically based and practically applied to the specific needs of the counselee. We believe that most of the counseling needs can be met in the sphere of the local Body of Christ through small groups or one-on-one ministry, where different gifted members of the body are able to minister to one another. However, Christ has placed within the body those who are particularly gifted and called into a biblically based counseling ministry. This may often, though not always, include the Senior Pastor.

The role of the Senior Pastor as it applies to the ministry of counseling shall be circumscribed. The Senior Pastor shall be responsible to meet with those who have a desire for further counseling than that which may be available within CEFC. The purpose of this meeting is to determine the nature and extent of the counseling need. If a referral is necessary, it shall be made to ministries outside CEFC. Except for extenuating circumstances (which shall be determined through advice of the Elders on a strictly confidential basis), the number of times that the Senior Pastor shall meet with the person or persons seeking counsel shall be limited to no more than two. This is to ensure that the person or persons involved are assured of getting the professional ministry they require through the referral process. The Senior Pastor will attempt to expedite this process as much as possible. If there is a financial constraint, it will be the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to make a recommendation to those overseeing the Helps Fund to consider financial assistance for the person(s) involved.

The demand for counseling in our society has grown dramatically over the past two decades. The Senior Pastor is not to be expected to allocate a significant amount of his time to this ministry. His primary function is to preach, teach, and disciple (see Senior Pastoral Agreement). Realistically, it is not possible for one person to carry this burden in a growing church. The referral process is the best approach to this ministry.

B. MARRIAGE

Biblical marriage--that God-ordained institution and relationship between a man and a woman--is the necessary bedrock for a stable, healthy, moral society. One marriage has the potential to touch great numbers of persons--either negatively or positively.

While recognizing that marriage is the norm for a man and a woman, we do recognize and affirm that singleness is also a high calling and can be the basis and means to a full and productive life, both in personal fulfillment and in loving service to God and to others. We affirm both the single and the marriage roles. Scripture is full of references to those who have brought glory to God in either of these callings. We encourage believers to serve the Lord undistractedly while they are single, using the advantages of their status for as long as He would have them remain in that state.

We insist that neither singleness (whether unmarried, divorced, separated, or widowed) nor marriage should be elevated in position above the other. The local body must be actively involved in ascribing dignity and respect to both its singles (i.e., unmarried, divorced, separated, widows/widowers) and its married. Care must be exercised that one is not emphasized to the neglect of the other. Both groups within the local church must feel that they are loved, accepted, and wanted.

With the increasing attack by Satan and society upon the home and upon biblical marriage, we dare not adopt a position of compromise or accommodation with the world's thought and values and say less than God does about the sanctity and importance of godly marriage. God's pattern in marriage is one man and one woman for life.

Marriage is ordained by God for His glory, our good, and as a picture of Christ and His Church. The Scriptures affirm that, in general, "It is not good for a man to dwell alone" (Gen. 2:18) and that "Whoever finds a wife finds something good" (Prov. 18:22). Marriage is designed to bring fulfillment, completeness (by the provision of a suitable partner), physical and emotional pleasure, and mutual care and service one to the other. It is in the bond of this sacred relationship that children are desired, conceived, born, and nurtured to physical and spiritual maturity and productive living.

Divorce, adultery, fornication, and all manner of sexual perversion constitute enemies of God's standard for a biblical marriage. The body of believers and its leadership must take a strong stand against all philosophies and life-styles that would undermine marriage and the home.

While the man and woman are equal before God in worth, the man has been designated by God as the head and leader in the home. His headship is to be carried out in the spirit of servant hood, with Christ-like love and mutual submission characterizing the relationship. He is not to "lord it over" his wife. He will be held accountable by God for the welfare and the health and outcome of the marriage and the family entrusted to his care and leadership. He is to be the provider and the protector. He is to be the spiritual leader, while all the time seeking to serve and build his partner. The wife is to be in willing, loving, and joyful submission to her husband as unto the Lord himself. Her husband is to be unto her as Christ is to His Church. They are to be in a relationship of mutual submission and unconditional love.

Recognizing these high biblical standards and ideals we therefore establish the following guidelines:

- 1.** A strong commitment to the teaching and preaching of the whole counsel of God a found in the Scriptures on issues touching marriage, singleness, and the home is indispensable. We encourage everyone, whether single or married, to exhibit purity and unselfish living based on biblical standards. These standards are to be modeled to the body and to the world in daily living.
- 2.** Christian marriage is to be between believers only. No church-approved wedding will involve the scripturally prohibited marriage of a believer and a nonbeliever in the awareness of our church leadership. The marriage of two nonbelievers will be reviewed on its individual merit by the Senior Pastor and the Elders, but with the understanding that the requirements listed below be met in full. In all cases, at least one of the individuals involved must attend CEFC regularly and consider it their church home.
- 3.** All requests for the Senior Pastor to perform a marriage ceremony should be submitted in writing to the Elder Board for approval prior to setting a date for the wedding. An introductory session, followed by a minimum of twelve (12) regular counseling sessions over a period of approximately six (6) months, and one in-church planning session with the Senior Pastor or his designate shall be required. A contract of mutual expectations and minimal standards shall be signed prior to the beginning of the counseling process. This contract can be terminated for adequate cause by either party upon written notification. Where needed or requested, the Elders shall serve as arbitrators and advisors.
- 4.** Loving church discipline aimed at producing repentance, forgiveness, healing, restoration, and reconciliation will be enacted when it is discovered that individuals in this body are in open violation of biblical standards for a Christian marriage or courtship.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: Genesis 1:28; 2:18-25; Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Psalms 127:4,5; 128:3,4; Amos 3:3; Matthew 19:6; I Corinthians 7:7-8,29-34; Ephesians 5:21-33; I Timothy 2:12-13; 1 Peter 3:1-6; Proverbs 5:18-20; 10:1; 15:20; 23:15,24-25; 31:10-31

C. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Divorce is a growing tragedy both within and without the Church. Christians have been tempted to follow the world's leading in this matter. As biblical believers we are not free to formulate our own convenient standards. God's Word provides definite instruction in dealing with this problem. The CEFC adheres to the following principles in dealing with this issue:

- 1.** Divorce is a process which involves the tearing apart of many areas of life which couple share together. This process begins long before it becomes known to others and can best be stopped by a willingness to receive help early. Therefore, it is of extreme importance that all couples continually work on their marriages. Husbands have a special responsibility before God in seeing that their marriages grow (Eph. 5:25-33). Divorce is not an irreversible process. At any point a couple can decide to rebuild their marriage to the place where God wants it to be. As a body of believers, we must be willing to help strengthen marriages with all the resources we have and begin necessary rebuilding processes as soon as possible.

- 2.** It is God's will and desire that one man and one woman be united together for life. Therefore, divorce is always displeasing to God. While all divorce is not sin, all divorce is brought about by sin.
- 3.** There are times when, because of sin, God permits divorce. This includes cases involving sexual unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:31-32, 19:1-12) and those involving an unequal yoke where the unsaved partner requests the divorce (I Cor. 7:10-16). Scriptural divorce carries with it the option to remarry, unless that right is forfeited. For example, two believers divorced for reasons other than immorality are required to remain unmarried or else be reconciled (I Cor. 7:10). Singleness is to continue until the former partner has died or has lost the right to reconciliation by establishing a marriage relationship with someone else.
- 4.** In cases where divorce took place before becoming a Christian, the believer is free to remarry in the Lord. In I Corinthians 7:12-16, Paul argues that if the unbelieving spouse leaves, dissolving the marriage, the believing spouse is free to remarry. In verse 28, Paul tells those who were "loosed from a wife" before salvation, that remarriage is not sin. Reconciliation and remarriage is God's ideal, but if this would create an unequal yoke spiritual discernment must be exercised.
- 5.** To remarry outside of the will of God is sin, but not in a continuous sense. Once the marriage has been consummated the new partners have obligated themselves to each other. The new relationship has nullified the old.
- 6.** To withhold sexual favor from one's spouse and contribute to the spouse's immorality does not clear one of offense. While the adultery may become grounds for a divorce, the guilt for the divorce is shared by the unsubmissive partner (I Cor. 7:3-5).
- 7.** The church must be prepared to help the families of single parents when the parent remains single for the sake of God's will. We must be prepared to honor such faith and obedience with compassionate care.
- 8.** God's Word does deal with divorce, so we have a responsibility (as with other sin) to deal with divorce related issues as they arise in our body. Since our goal is reconciliation, healing of the marriage, and restoration of fellowship with Christ, it is necessary to take such redemptive measures as are consistent with Scripture. This difficult task is to be carried out with love and prayer in the light of Gal. 6:1-2.
- 9.** In those cases where God's Word permits remarriage adequate time needs to be allowed for possible reconciliation and for needed healing and growth to occur in a person's life. There needs to be a recognition of any personal responsibility for the failure of the former marriage, repentance of any sin, acceptance of forgiveness, and a continuing effort to overcome those limitations and failures which might have contributed to the divorce. Forgiving the former partner is necessary before beginning a new relationship, and any obligations from the former marriage should be fulfilled. Both parties to new marriage need to express a willingness to make it a Christian marriage by full dependence on Christ and participation in the local church.
- 10.** Our God is a gracious and loving God who forgives sin. This includes sin which results from a biblically unwarranted divorce. If a person is willing to acknowledge and confess sin, God has promised to forgive (I John 1:9). The Church is made up of forgiven sinners. "And that is what some of you were, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 6:11). On this basis, persons with divorce in their past, after repentance and confession, are forgiven and can be members of a local church or hold a church office if their present attitude and walk with the Lord allows. This does not mean that the past can be completely ignored, for depending on the circumstances, past sins do affect our witness and ability to effectively serve. Time is also needed for healing in an individual's life and in the lives of others. The primary question is not so much about a person's past as about their current attitude toward the past and a proper present relationship with the Lord. However, as an Evangelical Free church we have agreed to abide by the decision reached at the 1982 General Conference to exclude divorced persons from pastoral positions in the church as ordained ministers

11. The body should be a place where the redemptive love of Christ is applied. The body has the responsibility to help restore those who have gone through the pain and suffering of divorce. This should be done through love, forgiveness, encouragement in the Lord, and acceptance of these persons that they may be returned to wholeness in Christ.

D. SEXUAL SIN

Over the past half century the U.S. has drifted away from a biblical perspective on human sexual conduct. Attitudes and practices have become increasingly paganistic as society has tended to adopt the standard that if the behavior is consensual and does not harm others (in a very narrow sense), then it should not be condemned. This has led to widespread adultery, fornication, and homosexual practice as well as the proliferation of pornography. We believe that all of these behaviors are viewed as sinful by God and are destructive spiritually, emotionally, and socially and that they serve to undermine the family and society. Furthermore, like dominoes, as one area of biblical sexual morality falls, it eventually leads to decline and deviancy in other areas of sexual behavior.

With the degeneracy in sexual conduct becoming more serious, the Church finds itself defending against the latest area of sexual sin and for all intents and purposes abandoning the defense against earlier sinful practices. This currently manifests itself with the attack of homosexuality by conservative churches while heterosexual sins are often ignored or overlooked. This is wrong, unfortunate and inappropriate since all sin is to be condemned and heterosexual sins are probably far more damaging in the aggregate to persons, families, and our society than homosexual sins. Having said this, it is still necessary to address the question of homosexuality.

Homosexuality has become a debated and contested topic in our society. While historically condemned as a deviate practice, we now have many arguing for its acceptance as an alternative lifestyle choice. In such a climate of controversy it is important to understand and articulate a biblical perspective in regard to this critical issue.

God plainly condemns the practice of homosexuality as sin. It is seen as a behavioral choice that is degrading and unnatural with grave consequences in this life and the next. Such behavior must be avoided under any circumstances. Though the culture and perhaps even the state may condone or promote homosexual practice, the Church is called to be a witness against such activity.

While the Church must warn against homosexuality, it is called to love all sinners, including the practicing homosexual. Forgiveness, cleansing, restitution and power for godly living are available to all who will repent and believe the gospel. Christians must make a distinction between the person and the sin, loving the former while condemning the latter. Lest we forget, the Bible makes clear that those who were once involved in homosexual lifestyles were converted to Christ and a part of the early church.

The CEFC is to be a place where all persons (not all behaviors) should find love, acceptance, and forgiveness. It should also be a place where people who are seeking to overcome sinful conduct feel loved, encouraged and safe. Let us minister to all who are hurting and in need, including those for whom sexual sin is a problem and a temptation.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURE: Gen. 19:1-29; Lev. 18:22; John 1:12; 3:16; 8:11; Rom. 1:16, 26-27; I Cor. 6:9-11; Phil. 2:13; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9

E. THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that God's first and most precious gift to mankind is life. It is through God that we move, breathe, and have our being. Since human beings are created in God's image, they have unique value and infinite worth. This fact makes human life sacred and provides a basis for "the sanctity of human life". In light of this, we condemn society's practice of abortion and infanticide and its movement towards euthanasia.

Abortion is a clear example of the fact that what is legal is not necessarily right or moral. We believe the original life breathed into Adam is transmitted seminally and is present at the moment of conception. Thus, human life begins when the sperm fertilizes the egg and this life continues until natural death. The body, the life, and the moral faculty of man originate simultaneously at conception. We totally reject the idea of the nonpersonhood of the unborn. We view abortion as the taking of innocent human life and a violation of God's commandment that we should not commit murder.

We believe that infanticide (the killing of newborn babies with medical problems or defects) is also a transgression of God's law. Since God is the author of all human life, only he is permitted to end it. We feel that the same reasoning applies to euthanasia (the termination of the aged, infirm, and terminally ill) and we adamantly oppose such practice. Arguments of social and personal convenience or economic necessity that are offered by proponents of abortion, infanticide or euthanasia are repugnant, abhorrent, and dangerous to a free society.

It is our view that narrow, self-interested human values cannot be applied to decide the fitness of a God-created human being to go on living. Proper care and sacrificial love are the Christian alternatives to abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

The attempt to replace the "sanctity of life ethic" with a "quality of life ethic" is wrong and dangerous. It involves not only a religious concern but also a denial of the basic human right to life. We must not conform to the world's thinking on this issue--we must confront it! We encourage all legal means to reverse these trends. We also recognize that opposition alone is not enough. We must provide compassionate help and assistance through life affirming alternatives.

We believe that these problems reflect more than just physical, economic, or cultural ills. Fundamentally, they are symptomatic of a spiritual illness for which the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only cure. We must work at all levels so that our society will once again choose life and not death.

RELEVANT SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7; 29:31; Exodus 20:13; 21:22-25; 22:22-24; 23:26; Numbers 35:30-34; Job 31:15; Psalm 10:17-18; 127:3-5; 139:13-16; Proverbs 24:10-12; Isaiah 44:2; 44:5; 45:9; 10:9; Jeremiah 1:5; Ezekiel 16:48-50; Luke 1:39-44; Acts 17:25; Romans 13:3-5; I Corinthians 6:19-20; II Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 2:10; 5:20; I John 3:14-15

VI. OTHER ISSUES

A. FREE WILL AND DIVINE CHOICE

The issues of free will and divine choice have perplexed and divided the Church for many centuries. Christians have tended to approach this subject with the view that these doctrines are mutually exclusive. We reject this thinking. We believe that the Bible teaches both divine election and free human choice. We accept the paradox inherent in this view and refuse to attempt to harmonize the Scriptures to satisfy our human desire for a nonparadoxical position.

We believe that it is necessary, as it is in many other areas of the faith, to hold both of these truths in tension. Rather than be troubled by this and other seeming paradoxes of Christianity, we view them as a sign of the divine authorship of the Bible. We accept the fact that dimensions of our faith must remain mysteries until we see "face to face".

B. POLITICS

In recent years, the issue of politics and religion has received a great deal of attention and has caused much controversy. We believe that it is important to have a well thought out position on this topic. It would be both naive and dangerous to simply ignore this important subject.

We believe that the basic mission of the visible Church is spiritual. It is our privilege and responsibility to know Jesus Christ and to make him known. We accept the fact that our Lord's Kingdom is not of this world. We object to the politicization of the Church and the exploitation of the Church for political gain.

We accept the principle of the separate autonomy of the Church and the State. This principle means that the State may not dictate in the area of religion--there must be freedom of religion. It does not mean that the Church or that the people of religious persuasion may not speak to the State or attempt to influence political outcomes. The Church has a prophetic role to play in society. That is, the Church has the right to speak out on issues that the Bible clearly addresses and to encourage action consistent with a biblical viewpoint. On matters where there is no clear biblical position, the Church should remain silent.

In general, the CEFC will avoid alignment with or support of individuals, parties, platforms, or policies. We encourage everyone to be responsible citizens however, and to exercise their political freedoms and to fulfill their civic duties as their consciences dictate. We expect that there will be a diversity of opinion on matters political. We encourage loving dialogue and sharing of opinions within the body rather than factious debating and arguing. We recognize, in the spirit of the Free Church, that this is a nonessential area over which we refuse to fight with each other.

The CEFC does recognize the need for virtuous leadership in society. We believe that the political arena can be a genuine area of God's calling. We also believe that Christian concern must be an ongoing process and not simply expressed at times of crisis.

Finally, we must remember to pray for those in authority. Our prayers should not only focus on those in the highest reaches of power, but should extend to the lowest levels as well. We must remember that God instituted government for our own good.

C. RACISM

The CEFC holds to the biblical view that racial prejudice or discrimination has absolutely no place in the life of a believer nor in the Church. We are one in Christ and there is neither "Jew nor Greek...bond nor free male nor female" and to elaborate on Paul's thoughts in Galatians 3:28, neither rich nor poor, black nor white. We believe there is no biblical basis for racial distinctions or considerations in our dealings with others. We are biologically one in our common parents Adam and Eve and all believers are spiritually one in Christ. God has created all peoples in his image and likeness, and Christ has died for all sinners.

Consistent with the above position is our view that interracial marriage is not condemned by Scripture. The concern of the Bible relates only to the unequal yoke, the marriage of an unbeliever with a believer. Racial or ethnic concerns are not an issue. May the CEFC be a place where love, acceptance, and forgiveness are freely and abundantly given to all. May we look upon the heart, not upon the outward appearance.

D. MATERIALISM

In recent decades the growth of The Evangelical Free Church of America has been most prominent within the American middle class. While this affords material blessings to our churches, it also creates special temptations which as responsible Christians we must be alert to avoid. The lure of materialism creates a false sense of "need" and a false sense of "ownership", tempting us to:

- 1.** Become pre-occupied with consumption, diverting our resources from God's work and inhibiting the Christian call to compassion and sharing
- 2.** Become calloused toward the needy, who are then abandoned to fend for themselves
- 3.** Become "self-sufficient," which replaces an attitude of dependence upon God as we falsely trust our own ability to plan and organize for the future

The values of efficiency and specialization that have resulted in an increase of material production in our society, can distort our outlook when uncritically applied to the church and to Christian ministry. We are then tempted to:

- 1.** Professionalize the ministry of the church
- 2.** Transfer to the church the responsibility of training our youth
- 3.** Make the church the sole environment of spiritual nurture
- 4.** Develop such a heavy program of church activities that families are robbed of leisure time and quiet moments for rest and reflection

The material success of our society can also improperly exalt the business model of management and the business measure of success. The Church is then tempted to:

- 1.** View ministry as investment with strictly calculable returns
- 2.** Adopt a marketing mentality which gives attention only to the young, to the upscale, or to new communities--disregarding those who are older or less attractive, whose wisdom or "different" perspective become obscured and ignored
- 3.** Dismiss "non-productive" persons as irrelevancies to be discarded as "throw-aways"
- 4.** Approach commitment to the church and worship from the perspective of a consumer, counting involvement solely in terms of personal benefit

In light of these many temptations,

- 1.** We determine to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness
- 2.** We seek to view our abundance as a blessing to be shared
- 3.** We resolve to reflect upon the possibility of our own cultural captivity, that we might resist the lure of materialism and those attitudes which threaten to compromise our faith and blunt our witness to Christ and his saving gospel

We call upon our churches to:

- 1.** Address these issues through teaching and preaching
- 2.** Have creative programs that portray the needs around us
- 3.** Exercise restraint in expenditures which are of limited value or are self-serving in nature
- 4.** Develop holistic ministries within and among our churches to meet the staggering needs of individuals and families

We encourage families and individuals to:

- 1.** Adopt a lifestyle that reflects an attitude of servant hood toward the less fortunate
- 2.** Pursue a pattern of sacrificial giving, releasing resources otherwise spent on self-indulgence, to be used in the glorious service of our Lord Jesus Christ
- 3.** Adopt a needy family, a child in another country, a resident of a nursing home, or to volunteer for work in a church food pantry or clothing exchange
- 4.** Explore uses of capital that would create jobs and provide job training for those who for various reasons are ill-equipped to find a job or hold employment

God help us find our strength and our life's purpose in Him and His Holy Word, that we might keep our focus on the eternal glory of His kingdom, and have the courage to make "spiritual" decisions about the use of our time, our abilities, and our resources.

Source: Social Concerns Committee of the EFCA, 1988.

E. THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

The New Age Movement is a religious system of growing influence which seeks to give meaning to human existence and resolve the complexities of life. It is incumbent upon the Christian community to understand its teaching and expose its errors.

As Christians, we believe that the Bible, God's revelation to man, is the standard for truth and that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, whose life, death, and resurrection provide the only means by which humankind can come into a right relationship with the Creator.

As Christians, we need to be aware that the teaching of the New Age Movement is in deep conflict with Christian truth. We recognize that the Christian faith and the New Age Movement address many of the same issues:

- 1.** The emphasis on cooperation instead of competition.
- 2.** The protection of earth instead of exploitation and destruction of the earth's resources.
- 3.** The promotion of creativity.
- 4.** The promotion of peace.
- 5.** The call for radical transformation, a total change of mind.
- 6.** The importance of the body and its care; exercise, healthy food, rest.
- 7.** The importance of human potential and positive self-image.
- 8.** A sensitivity to the global village and our responsibility to people in other lands.

However, the basis for working toward these goals and ideas comes from a very different understanding of truth. The Christian sees him or herself as accountable to Scripture and to the God of creation who will ultimately judge the actions of each human being. The New Age thinker sees him or herself as a god, determining his or her own destiny in a global unification and by means of various life experiences.

The Christian believes that God is the Creator and that he is distinct from His creation. The New Age thinker believes that human beings and all they experience are already one, that this essential unity is god and therefore humanity is god.

Christians believe that human beings are sinful and that they must trust in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin in order to be transformed to a new way of life. The New Age thinker believes that as human beings become more aware of their oneness with the universe they will be transformed in their way of thinking.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to come into a right relationship with the Creator and that all other religious claims concerning redemption are false. The New Age thinker believes that all religious systems are part of the oneness of truth in the universe.

Finally, the Christian believes that God, of His own initiative, will establish a new heaven and a new earth, and that at the present we ought to act in a way consistent with the new age to come. The New Age thinker believes that a new and better world will come as humanity realizes its oneness with the universe.

We therefore call upon the constituency of the Evangelical Free Church of America to:

- 1.** Be aware that the Bible teaches that the adversary maintains a conspiracy against humankind.
- 2.** Be aware that spiritual deception has been part of Satan's plan through all the ages.
- 3.** Be aware that the Christian is called upon to fill his/her mind with the things of God as revealed in Scripture, not to empty his/her mind through meditation in order to find God.
- 4.** Be aware that we should be wise in our understanding of the teaching of the New Age Movement and be prepared to warn against its deception and speak the truth of God in love.
- 5.** Be fully convinced that true freedom and eternal truth come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord as revealed in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments.

Source: Social Concerns Committee of the EFCA, 1990.

F. FREEMASONRY AND OTHER SECRET LODGES

Because the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church is concerned to remain faithful to the Scriptures and dedicated solely to the Lord Jesus as Savior, we have concluded that it is important to warn everyone of the dangers of membership in so-called "secret lodges", particularly those associated with Freemasonry.

Among the reasons why we feel membership in these organizations is incompatible with a full and uncompromising loyalty to Christ are the following:

- 1.** Freemasonry, while of immense benefit to many through its charitable activities, is obviously an organization with religious connotations. It has its own rituals, prayers, altars, chaplains, oaths, dogmas and spiritual goals. It is this very religious character that makes Freemasonry offensive to the Church and a danger to all its members. Since its rituals and dogmas are not those of the biblical church, Freemasonry is, in effect, in competition with the Church and a counterfeit capable of deceiving many as though it were the real Church (Gal. 1:6-10).
- 2.** Freemasonry is syncretistic in its religious emphasis; that is, it attempts to fuse the believers of many faiths together as one. This is done to such an extent that it contradicts the clear uniqueness of Jesus and the Christian faith as taught in the Bible. To teach that one's God is a matter of personal preference is to advocate a religious relativism severely condemned in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 8:1-6).
- 3.** Freemasonry teaches that salvation is gained by personal merit as a result of good works. This is contrary, of course, to the Gospel of Christ, whose righteousness alone is able to save us. One cannot believe himself saved by Christ alone and at the same time by his own good works (Eph. 2:1-10).

5. Freemasonry, with its secrecy and binding oaths for membership, rivals Christ by demanding what He alone deserves: public and private, full and final allegiance. Nothing in the teaching of the Church is meant to be hidden; it is open to all. The oaths, in their purpose and severity, are contradictory to the nature of the Church and the Christian's supreme loyalty to Christ (II Cor. 4:1-6; Rom. 10:1-13).

In view of these and other dangers relative to Freemasonry, the Carlisle Evangelical Free Church:

- 1.** Advises all who are members or prospective members of the Freemasons (and related organizations) to resign from membership and to end all involvement after personal prayer and consideration of all the facts.
- 2.** Advises the congregation to respond gently and lovingly with brothers and sisters who are, for one reason or another, involved with Masonry (exhortation must always be given in love).
- 3.** Advises any who may be involved with Masonry or other secret lodges to seek the counsel of the pastor or an elder if there is uncertainty regarding this statement or their involvement.

It is the policy of this church that anyone who is a member of the Freemasons (and related organizations) or any other questionable secret lodge is not eligible for official membership in the CEFC. Anyone who would like literature on this subject should see a Pastor or an Elder.

Acknowledgment: This statement has been adapted from a statement by the Evangelical Free Church of Hershey and borrows heavily from that document.