

# **Christian Community Policy of New Hope Christian and Missionary Alliance Scottdale, PA 15683**

## **I. Our Christian Community.**

New Hope Alliance Church of Scottdale, PA, of The Christian and Missionary Alliance (the “C&MA”) is a Christian community that exists to exercise and express our Christian beliefs and Christian mission. These beliefs include those set forth in the Statement of Faith and other sections of the Manual of the C&MA (the “Manual”) and additional beliefs set forth in this Policy or in other policies adopted by the Church governing body.

We exercise and express our beliefs in various ways, including:

- i. As a Community. We believe that God calls people to live out their faith in community with other believers, and that through such community we understand and nurture more fully the mystery of the gospel, the glory of God, the dignity and image of God which He has bestowed upon us, and the intimacy and joy for which God created us. Accordingly, we believe that our Christian community is itself an exercise and expression of our Christian beliefs; and
- ii. Through Our Activities. We believe that all of our activities should express our beliefs and be rendered in service to God as a form of worship. As such, all Church activities further our Christian mission or purposes and are an exercise and an expression by the Church, and by each participating representative, of our Christian beliefs.

Our Christian community members include both representatives and participants. Our community representatives include pastors, officers, senior leadership team members, employees, volunteers, and formal church members. The participants in the life of our community include non-member attendees, guests, and contractors/vendors. These participants contribute to our Christian community, but they do not represent the Church unless they are also serving in one of the representative roles identified above.

## **II. General Standards for Our Christian Community.**

As a Christian community, the Church exercises and expresses its Christian beliefs through the following standards.

#### **A. Roles and Expectations for Representatives.**

In response to God's calling on their lives, our representatives work together to advance our Christian mission. Church representatives are responsible for defining, cultivating, leading, and/or representing our Christian community as an expression and exercise of our Christian beliefs. As such, each Church representative is an integral part of our community. Accordingly, we expect each representative to comply with the following obligations:

1. *Christian Beliefs.* All *representatives* shall affirm their agreement with the Christian beliefs as expressed in the C&MA Statement of Faith<sup>1</sup> and shall not subscribe to or promote any religious beliefs inconsistent with such beliefs. With respect to other Christian beliefs held by the C&MA, all *representatives* must affirm our belief that their calling to serve in our Christian community requires them to respect such beliefs and to abide by community standards exercising or expressing such beliefs.
2. *Christian Conduct Standards.* All *representatives* shall at all times (both during working and nonworking hours) (i) model our Christian beliefs for others, (ii) perform all of their responsibilities as a service to God, and (iii) endeavor to comply with Biblical standards of conduct exercising or expressing our Christian beliefs, including Christian community standards adopted by the Church from time to time.
3. *Distinctly Christian Activities.* Each *representative* shall be ready, willing, and able to lead or contribute to distinctly Christian activities such as devotional worship or prayer services.

#### **B Roles and Expectations for Participants.**

Although non-members, attendees, guests, contractors/vendors, and other program participants do not necessarily represent the Church Christian community, they do contribute to our community, to the experiences of other participants, and to the accomplishment of the Church's mission. Accordingly, we expect participants to respect our beliefs and abide by the Christian community standards applicable to them.

*Participants* are expected, in the course of their participation in our community, to respect our beliefs, support our mission, and comply with applicable community standards. Depending on their role, they may or may not be required to affirm our Christian beliefs.

<sup>1</sup> Representatives who are formal church members are not required by the Uniform Constitution for Accredited Churches to affirm the full Statement of Faith. Formal church members are required to meet the qualifications expressed in Article III, Section 1.

**C. Standards for Community Activities and Facility Use.**

In furtherance of its mission, the Church engages in activities and provides facilities for evangelism, discipleship, Bible studies, worship services, conferences, retreats, education, and other activities. We engage in such activities and use our facilities solely to exercise and express our Christian beliefs and to further our Christian mission or purposes. In furtherance of our purposes, we may provide services or goods to, and may allow use of our facilities by, other groups and persons who are not associated with the Church or the C&MA. But we may prohibit any activity, or any use of Church facilities by another group or person, if we determine that such activity or use either:

- i. expresses a view contrary to our Christian beliefs,
- ii. is inconsistent with any applicable Christian community standards adopted by the Church from time to time, or
- iii. materially undermines our ability to accomplish our mission or act in furtherance of our purposes.

**III. Implementation.**

**A. Compliance with Community Standards.**

1. Spiritual Discernment.

The determination as to whether any particular *representative*, *participant*, activity, or use of Church facilities complies with the applicable standards requires spiritual discernment applied to each particular circumstance and shall be made in the sole discretion of the Church leaders designated by the governing body. With respect to uses by other groups or persons, the Church may consider without limitation both the content of the proposed activities and whether the group or person is generally perceived as advocating views contrary to its Christian beliefs.

2. Noncompliance.

If any Church *representative* or *participant* does not comply with any applicable community standard, such individual shall have an obligation to disclose such noncompliance to the Church. If the Church determines, through such disclosure or otherwise, that a *Church representative* or *participant* is not complying with an applicable community standard, then the Church may, in its sole discretion, determine the impact of any initial noncompliance on the Church's exercise and expression of its Christian

beliefs, and whether such individual or group intends or is likely to continue in such noncompliance. Such determinations also require spiritual discernment and shall be made as described above.

The Church may also dismiss such individual from his or her position on the basis that such individual's noncompliance either (i) reflects that the individual does not affirm the Christian beliefs required for such position, or (ii) undermines the expression and exercise of the Church Christian community. Such action may be taken in accordance with any applicable procedures adopted by the Church, including The Christian and Missionary Alliance Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal.

### **3. Mission-Based Exceptions.**

In some situations, the Church may best exercise and express its beliefs and advance its mission through a *representative*, *participant*, activity, or facility use not in compliance with one or more of the applicable community standards. If the governing body determines, in its sole discretion, that such a situation exists, then the governing body shall have the discretion to authorize an exception to this Policy. Any *representative* or *participant* granted an exception shall be asked to respect our Christian beliefs, our mission, and our community standards.

### **B. Delegated Authority.**

To exercise or express our Christian beliefs more fully, the governing body may establish additional standards based on our Christian beliefs for the activities and facilities at the Church or for Church *representatives* or other community *participants*.

### **C. Scope.**

The Church may amend this document at any time. This document is not intended to create any express or implied contract of employment or to alter the at-will employment relationship between the Church and its employees.

## **III. Additional Standards for Our Community.**

In response to current cultural trends, we have determined to articulate more specifically our Christian beliefs and associated community standards on the following subjects.

### **A. Human Sexuality and Marriage.**

1. Our Christian Beliefs.

The Church expressly adopts as its Christian beliefs the Statement on Human Sexuality and the Statement on Marriage-Divorce-Remarriage, as currently stated in the C&MA Manual.

2. Standards for Community Activities.

Our beliefs regarding human sexuality and marriage shall apply in all policies and programs in the Church Christian community. Among other things, in our 5 of 6 policies and programs we will recognize only marriages consistent with our Christian beliefs. Any events in Church facilities pertaining to marriage (e.g., weddings, receptions, anniversary celebrations) must involve only marriages consistent with our Christian beliefs. We may designate certain activities, facilities, or rooms, including restrooms and locker rooms, for participation or use by a single sex, and only individuals having the designated sex as determined in accordance with our beliefs may participate in such activities or use such facilities or rooms. Also, no pornographic materials may be present in any of our facilities or activities.

3. Standards for Community Representatives.

We expect all Church representatives to live in accordance with our beliefs regarding human sexuality and marriage (which include refraining from sexual relations outside of marriage and avoiding pornography).<sup>2</sup> Among other things, we expect all representatives to avoid circumstances where there is temptation and opportunity to engage in sexual conduct contrary to our beliefs. Representatives may be asked to sign a statement affirming their agreement with our beliefs regarding human sexuality and marriage and compliance with these standards.

4. Standards for Community Participants.

We expect all participants not to affirm, promote, or engage in sexual relations contrary to our beliefs (and to avoid pornography) in connection with their use of Church facilities or participation in Church activities.

We expect all guest groups to respect our Christian beliefs while participating in our activities or using our facilities. We do not accept guest groups whose primary mission or objectives are to promote, encourage, or support views in conflict with our beliefs, even if that is not the intended purpose of their event. For example, we would not host a Christian group formed to affirm same sex relationships even if the group's event objectives were consistent with our beliefs.

## **B. Religious Activities.**

We engage solely in activities that further our Christian mission or purposes. Because we believe that all such activities are conducted in service to God as means for spiritual growth, we consider these activities to be a form of worship.

We distinguish between exclusively religious activities and integrated religious activities. Exclusively religious activities refer to activities that primarily further only religious purposes, such as devotional worship or Christian education.<sup>2</sup> Identifying oneself as having a same sex orientation does not disqualify an individual from serving as a representative provided such individual affirms the Christian beliefs and complies with the standards applicable to such individual's position. Integrated religious activities refer to activities that substantially further both religious and nonreligious purposes. Such activities are often similar to activities conducted by nonreligious organizations and may include certain educational programs, athletic, cultural, humanitarian, and social service activities. We conduct such activities in response to God's calling and in furtherance of and in accordance with our Christian beliefs. In addition, we present our Christian viewpoints in such activities as applicable.

With respect to restrictions that may be imposed on the use of funds, facilities, or other benefits, we shall not agree to any restriction that would preclude us from conducting our integrated religious activities in furtherance of our Christian mission and in accordance with our Christian beliefs. To the extent consistent with this commitment, we may agree not to use designated funds, facilities, or benefits for exclusively religious activities.

## **C. Sanctity of Life.**

The Church expressly adopts as its Christian beliefs the Statement on the Sanctity of Life as currently stated in the C&MA Manual.

As dictated by these beliefs, we will not, as an institution, fund abortions in any manner, including through a health care benefit plan that covers drugs used to induce abortions. Any requirement to facilitate abortions by offering such coverage, and any penalty for failing to offer such coverage, would directly and substantially burden and undermine our exercise and expression of our Christian beliefs.

## **D. Social Media, Political Activity, and Other Public Statements.**

In any public forum, including social media, we expect representatives to respect our Christian beliefs and not to challenge, disparage, or undermine them. If a representative chooses to express his or her disagreement with a particular belief that he or she is not

required to affirm, we expect such representative to do so in a manner that respects our belief and makes it clear he or she is not expressing the view of the Church.

**Position on Gender**  
**Addendum to Christian Community Policy**  
**New Hope Christian and Missionary Alliance**  
**Scottdale, PA 15683**

The topic of gender raises questions for the church today in an unprecedented manner. A biblical and traditional understanding of man and woman is no longer assumed in our culture, embedded in our laws, or reflected in many forms of media. As a result, parents, pastors, school administrators, and camp directors face challenges that were never before considered.

It is critical to recognize that gender identity challenges are different than those stemming from sexual orientation and therefore need to be considered differently.

**Definitions**

An understanding of the ever expanding and evolving gender definitions is not only helpful but necessary to engage with those identifying in nonbiblical/traditional ways. Emerging Sexual Identities by Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky provides a constructive list. The following definitions can be a good starting point.

- Transgender/Trans: Umbrella terms for various ways people express their gender identity when it does not correspond to their birth (or biological) sex.
- Trans man: A biological female who identifies as male.
- Trans woman: A biological man who identifies as female.
- Gender Dysphoria: Experience of significant distress caused by the incongruence when the gender someone identifies with does not match their biological sex.
- Affirmed gender: Culturally defined as the sex/gender with which a person identifies.
- Assigned gender: The sex category (i.e., male, female, intersex) that is identified for an infant at birth by medical professional and parents.
- Intersex: A rare group of conditions when a person is born with a discrepancy between their external and internal genitals.

[The above definitions are social constructs and are not consistent with a Christian world view or of New Hope Alliance Church.]

**Cultural Context**

Sex, gender, and masculinity or femininity all play a role in understanding gender.

**Sex** is determined by whether a person has an X and Y chromosome (a man) or two X chromosomes (a woman). God created men and women with significant differences. The primary distinctions present at birth are the complementary sexual organs and reproductive systems between men and women. A variety of secondary characteristics develop later, including differences in height, muscle mass, body hair, and bone density.

**Gender**, according to the modern world, is not determined by physical distinctions but rather by how you feel inside and how you express yourself. Gender could align with your biological sex, be the opposite sex, be both, neither, and/or something entirely different.

**Masculinity and femininity** are another point of controversy. Characteristics considered masculine or feminine can vary widely between cultures or across generations. These different representations have led to a belief that masculinity and femininity are more socially constructed than determined by our biological sex. In modern culture, masculinity and femininity, as social constructs, are thought of as categories that can be deconstructed and then reconstructed to fit a person's affirmed gender.

### **What does The Alliance believe?**

We believe that God created people as male and female and that we bear his image (Genesis 1:27). We believe that our created body is an essential part of who we are and is good. We believe that we are to honor God with our body (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). As such, we believe that God's design is that our created biological sex determines whether we are male or female.

We believe that God's purposes in his creation are often beyond our understanding (Isaiah 55:8) and that we can trust his design for each human being (Psalm 139:13–16), including their created sex.

We believe that God graciously and mercifully offers redemption and wholeness to everyone who repents and submits to him. We believe that God has committed to us the message of reconciliation to those who don't yet believe (2 Corinthians 5:19).

We believe that while Christians are set free from the bondage of sin (Romans 6:1–14), we are still impacted by our fallen nature and will continue to be transformed until we enter eternity (2 Corinthians 3:18).

As we engage people with the grace and truth of Jesus Christ (John 1:17), we must be people of prayer who seek biblical wisdom through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (James 1:5). We believe that the gospel compels us to accept and welcome everyone with respect and warm hospitality, regardless of their gender identification. However, we believe that acceptance is not the same as affirmation. Acceptance recognizes and cares for others as created image bearers, while affirmation of their gender choices may lead us to honor something not honored by God (1 Cor. 13:6).

Responding to gender issues requires pastoral wisdom and discernment and will vary depending on the specific facts and circumstances. What should we expect from someone for church membership, baptism, or those serving in significant leadership and teaching positions? Is it pleasing to the Lord to use pronouns that don't match their biological sex? How do we determine bathroom use? How will the church respond to and love someone who has had reassignment surgeries, later repents, and yet cannot undo the physical transformation? Can this person serve as an elder or a Sunday school teacher? These decisions provide opportunities to glorify God and love those who are part of our church family.

Finally, as is the case for all ministry, it's important to provide wise pastoral leadership, guidance, and support to all who are in relationship with a transgender person.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our neighbor without conditions. Many of us have close relationships with people who are wrestling with their gender identity or other issues related to their sexuality. That should cause us to show Christlike empathy toward others involved in similar struggles. We may be the answer to the prayers of a believing family member of a transgender person when they move into our neighborhood or visit our church.

Our opportunity to exercise spiritual influence is dependent on treating these individuals with love and respect as fellow human beings created in the image of God. In so doing, we honor Jesus.

Written by the C&MA President's Cabinet and endorsed by the Board of Directors to guide and encourage Alliance leaders to shepherd in both truth and love. SEC-4