

A CHARGE TO KEEP I HAVE

A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill --
Oh, may it all my pow'rs engage
To do my Master's will.

Arm me with jealous care,
As in thy sight to live;
And, oh, Thy servant, Lord, prepare
A strict account to give.

Help me to watch and pray,
And on thyself rely;
Assured if I my trust betray,
I shall forever die.

Charles Wesley

(The Christian Responding to God's
Call to Holiness)

Preface:

Having been reminded of the various concerns among our churches in the 1991 Ministers' Meeting in Canada, we as a committee are resolved to assist in drawing up a statement of position on the issues brought to our attention. A listing of these follows:

1. Divorce and Remarriage
2. Excommunication and Shunning
3. Television
4. Radio
5. Video
6. Sister's Veiling (size)
7. Instrumental Music
8. Public Bathing
9. Casual Wear
10. Rock, Country, Secular Music
11. Courtship Standards
12. Sports
13. Lord's Day Activities
14. Properly-Chaperoned Youth
15. Hairstyles (Brethren and Sisters)
16. Mutual Respect For Committee Work
17. Effective Teaching Program For Parents
18. Scriptural Unity

It is with great thanksgiving to our God that we notice considerable conviction in these areas among our congregations. We wish to express our appreciation to all those who are supporting the church's program and who have been faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that God would continue to bless the faithfulness of His people with stability, direction, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost!

We are, also, aware that there is need for growth and maturity in some aspects. It is our conviction that we need to persist in those things which are good and to keep building on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A faithful church is one that is ever growing in the Lord through the preaching and exercise of the Word. It is our desire to effectively strengthen our congregation's position on the above-mentioned areas of concern by lifting up a program of clear teaching on the pertinent principles of God's Word.

This printing has been prepared as a brief statement of our Biblical position as it touches most of these situations. It is designed to be a "spring-board" to further consider the call to Holiness, and the work of the church. It is our prayer that we may grow together "till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

Bennie Byler

Bennie Byler (Chairman)

John Mast

John Mast

Leonard Overholt

Leonard Overholt

Eugene Eicher

Eugene Eicher

Perry Troyer

Perry Troyer

I. THE SANCTITY OF THE LORD'S WORK

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Scriptural Unity

We believe and confess that the Lord's work is most effectively undertaken when the saints function together on a plane of scriptural unity. There is a common walk of obedience to God (ISam.15:22; John 14:15; Acts 5:29), a working together (ICor.12:4-12,25-27), a mutual sharing (Rom.1:12); a unified approach to a separation to God and from the world (Rom.12:1,2; IICor.6:14-18), a loving forbearance (Gal.6:2; Eph. 4:1-3) and a careful administration of scriptural discipline in a God-honoring body of born-again believers. Sin cannot be condoned in the Body of Christ, but it must be addressed and rooted out with the discipling ministration of the loving brotherhood (Matt.18:15-17). We adhere to the articles of the Dortrect Confession (1632) as they discuss excommunication and shunning. God's method of scriptural discipline must be employed if the Bride of Christ is to remain "pure" and the saints are to be "warned" and the sinners are to be "reclaimed". The Bible teaches redemptive and corrective discipline, and that it is the duty of the church to administer it. Membership in the church is granted by the voice and consent of the body. Therefore it is the responsibility of the church to restrict the privileges of disobedient members, and to select and administer whatever discipline the case requires, in keeping with the following scriptures: Gal.6:1 **Restore such an one;** Luke 17:3 **rebuke him;** Rom.16:17 **mark them, avoid them;** ICor.5:11 **not to keep company, with such an one no not to eat;** v.13 **put away from among yourselves;** IIThess.3:14 **note that man, have no company with him;** IThess.5:14 **warn them;** IIThess.3:6 **withdraw yourselves;** ITim.1:19,20 **delivered unto Satan;** ITim.6:3-5 **from such withdraw thyself;** Titus 3:10 **reject.**

Excommunication & Shunning

The two-fold purpose and goal is to keep the church pure, (ICor.5:6) **A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;** and to restore the offender, (ICor.5:5) **that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.** In reprovng or in shunning we are not to count them as enemies, but **to admonish them as brethren** (IIThess.3:15). The church is not to be partakers of the evil deeds of the erring one, but to show Christian love and concern for his soul.

Faithfulness

Because of the urgency of the work and the much work to be done, it is necessary that the believers are diligent in the exercise of their God-given ministries and areas of service. There is something for everyone to do! **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"** (ICor.15:58). In this time of spiritual "laxity" and "drifting", we call each believer to **"take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them"** (ITim.4:16). We believe that each one of the true believers in Christ Jesus has been called to **"Study (give diligence) to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (IITim.2:15). The church is to continually challenge the believers to accept their responsibility in walking carefully before the Lord. **"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as**

wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph.5:14-16).

- Witnessing** As faithful children of God, we will be diligent to heed the Great Commission and we will be a witness for God in all of life's experiences. **"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matt.28:19,20).** Also, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"** (Matt.5:16). The scriptures teach us it is God's desire that ALL men would be saved (ITim.2:3,4). This, however, will not be possible until they hear the Gospel! We have been given the ministry of reconciliation and the word of reconciliation and we are to exercise ourselves as ambassadors for Christ (II Cor.5:18-20). As we are "distinctive" for God and for Christ, we will shine forth clearly for Him (Matt.5:14) in the midst of the confusion of our surrounding society. Because of the many ecumenical pressures to "compromise" and to "blend" our witness, we warn against identifying with an involvement in anything which would serve to diminish the "distinctive" principles and applications by the which we live. Our witness can only be "genuine" and "alive" when it maintains the savour, or saltiness (Matt.5:13) of the Word! A positive testimony for Christ will be hindered if it is not guided by the Holy Spirit and marked by a godly carefulness and consistency!
- Christians Are Distinctive**
- Ecumenical Compromise**
- The Importance of Consistency**
- Propriety** In all aspects of the Lord's work, it is important that we observe the principle of godly propriety. **"Let all things be done decently and in order"** (ICor.14:40). For this reason our services are to be conducted with all gravity and carefulness. We should avoid things or situations which detract from the worship of God. We avoid drama which is built upon pretense. Pretense borders on hypocrisy, making it inconsistent with worship **"in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:24).
- No Drama**
- Musical Instruments** We believe that God's perfect and consistent order for music is the unaccompanied (a cappella) singing from a heart that is sanctified unto our God. We avoid Rock, Country or Secular music. **"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"** (Eph.5:19); **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"** Col.3:16
- Rock, Country, & Secular Music**
- Committee Work** Church committee work is to be sanctified unto God in its sphere of usefulness. Each committee member (in Christ) is motivated by the Spirit of God to reach for the highest level of God's purpose in the midst of each decision. There is no place for politics when a group of Christians get together to do God's business! There is a mutual respect and christian courtesy for one another in committee work. We are taught in the Holy Scripture to be unified and of one mind as the body of Christ. Each member functioning for the well being of the Body. John 17:20-26; 13:34-35; ICor.12:12-31. All labors in the work of the church are to edify the body, rather than cause division. ICor.1:10; 11:17-19. **"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him"** (Col.3:17).
- No Politics**

II. THE SANCTITY OF GOD'S ORDER

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" ICor.11:3.

The Priority of God's Order

God has specifically detailed an order of headship so His will and work might be best accomplished. It should be noted that God's work must be done in God's way. We chose to accept the lines of responsibility which God intends for the home, the Church, the Christian Day School, or any part of God's program. A good guideline for us to follow as we walk with God is found in Proverbs 3:6: **"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."**

Devotional Head Covering

One of the beautiful expressions of God's order of the headship is found in I Corinthians 11:1-16, as it discusses the woman's devotional head-covering. This devotional covering is a testimony of God's order of headship in practice. To be the most effective and consistent symbol possible, it is necessary that the expression be church-regulated. Several basic principles should be clearly manifested by the wearing of the devotional head covering. 1. The covering should be religiously distinctive in appearance (a symbol of a religious application). 2. The covering should be large enough to cover (a symbol of obedience). 3. The covering worn within the church fellowship should be of the same type (a symbol of unity). 4. The covering should be worn consistently throughout the day (a symbol of faithfulness). 5. The covering should be of a solid color (a symbol of simplicity and solemnity). The devotional headcovering is commanded for the woman as a sign of her submission to her three-fold Head: man, Christ, and God. Man, then, is to show absolute submission to his invisible Head, and to pray and prophesy with his head "uncovered". (I Cor.11:7).

The Principle of Submission

The woman's submission to man is also manifested in her "carefulness" to stay in her appointed place within the public assembly. I Tim.2:11-12 expresses this point: **"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"**. It is important for both men and women and the boys and the girls to be submitted to the headship order of God, both as a "spiritual" reality and as an "outward" expression of faithfulness. As each one faithfully moves within the appointed sphere of responsibility, God's witness is magnified in all the earth.

The Walk of Orderliness

The apostle Paul wrote something wonderful about the church at Colosse: **"For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ"** (Col.2:5). The Christian walk is a life of godly order. The Christian's being is filled with the presence of God. Individuals, who have "ordered" their lives after the example of Christ Jesus, will abstain from casual attire, worldly hair-dos, and such casual permissiveness.

Casual Attire Worldly Hairdos Permissiveness

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Mixed Bathing

Christian discipline cannot countenance mixed bathing, or any other uncomely associations that would mar the holiness of God in His children.

f. Permanence

III. THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb.13:4). We believe and confess that there is an "honorable" state of marriage which has been instituted of God (**" and He brought her unto the man"** Gen.2:22) for the preservation and welfare of mankind.

Honourable Marriage

This blessed state of matrimony, according to the holy design of God, consists of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:22) and is indissoluble (except by death - ICor.7:39) according to the "one flesh" principle established by God in the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:24) and the express words of our Lord, when He said, **"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"** (Matthew 19:6).

No Divorce/ Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage is therefore condemned by the clear pronouncement of God's eternal Word (Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18). The scripture also does not sanction any excuses, loop-holes, or the exceptions to its own clear statement on the permanence of the marital union.

Honourable Pre-Marital Conduct

The holiness of the marital relationship is attested to and supported by the gravity and solemnity of the pre-marital days. Pre-marital conduct is an expression of holy purity (**"...keep thyself pure"** I Tim.5:22) and submissive trust in the leading of the Lord (Psalms 34:8,9). Knowing that the lust of the flesh indwells the body, and that **Christian** courtship depends on the soul and spirit, we believe that all forms of physical contact (holding hands, petting, hugging, kissing, etc.) are wisely withheld until after marriage. This "hands-off" policy contributes positively to the stability and nurture of the relationship on a spiritual plane and, therefore, it is to be taught diligently among our people.

Christian Courtship

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IV. THE SANCTITY OF THE HOME

"For I know him (Abraham), That he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..." (Gen.18:19). **Choose this day whom ye will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"** (Josh.24:15).

Elements of God's Order

We believe and confess that the Christian home was ordained of God to be a place of divine blessing and godly instruction. God's order (ICor.11:3) is beautifully manifested in the husband's love (Eph.5:25), the wife's submission (Eph.5:22), and the children's obedience (Eph. 6:1-3).

Family Worship

Christian parents are obligated to exercise their parental responsibility in bringing up the children **"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"** (Eph.6:4). Much of the disarray and trouble in church settings (and, of course, in the "world"!) is due to homes which are slothful, careless, or rebellious in applying Biblical principles to everyday life. **WE HEREWITH CALL UPON OUR HOMES AND OUR FAMILIES TO BE ORDERED BY GOD!** By disciplining ourselves and our children for God, we are preparing for heaven and for Christian service. Christian hospitality is much encouraged as a vital part of Christian family life! The fathers are to be faithful "priests" of the daily family altar, and, in addition to this larger family worship, private devotions are to be expected of each member of the family. Fathers and mothers are to be united by the Spirit of God

Teaching
Program By
The Parents

The Christian
Father Is
Responsible

in their vision, administration and discipline, so as not to confuse or frustrate the children's heaven-ward direction. God's holiness is to pervade every issue in the home and will be evidenced in such things as the attire that is worn, the attitudes which are taught and caught, and the furnishings which are present in the home. The church standard is to be faithfully observed in our homes by older and younger alike. The Christian father is responsible to create and maintain this environment of "separated" consistency and is charged, after the example of Abraham, to **"command his children and his household after him."**

V. THE SANCTITY OF THE LORD'S TIME AND TALENTS

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:39).

Lord's Day
Activities

"Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:1-3). May the Lord's day (Sunday) be set aside from secular toil of the week to rest and worship; a day to be refreshed and strengthened in the Christian fellowship and holy meditation, and to draw our souls into the presence of God. The Lord's day should not be considered leisure-time to indulge in activities that are not conducive to the purpose for which it is set aside.

A Walk of
Holiness

It is our belief that we are under "holy orders" in the midst of our total life experience. **"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:13-16).** We are to conduct ourselves with sobriety as becometh followers of the Lord (Titus 2:1-8; 11-12). We will not be a friend of "worldliness" (James 4:4), but will instead walk as "strangers and pilgrims" in this world, thus, abstaining **"from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11).**

Principle of
Self-Denial

Colossians 5:24 reminds us: **And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts".** Because we are now **"risen with Christ, we seek those things which are above"** (Colossians 3:1) with a renewed mind and a separated unto God conformity (Romans 12:2). In the midst of the many choices in life, we humbly say, after the manner of our Saviour: **"...not my will, but Thine, be done"** (Luke 22:42). We walk with God in Christ (Col.2:6) and we are God's possession (ICor.6:20).

Radio, T.V.
Videos

Due to this divine orientation in our lives, we will not consent to be under the bondage to the enslaving entertainments of our technological age. We acknowledge the aggression of the mass media arrayed against the saints of God. Radio, television, videos, and the movie theaters seek to propagandize the Christian spirit to compromise and to let-down on a Biblically-principled life. We reject these overtures of "the prince of

Principle of
Separation

the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:20 to draw us into a "worldly" mind-set. We reject the presence of the radios, televisions, and the videos in our homes due to their subverting and immoral influence. **"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"** (II Corinthians 6:16-18). It is, therefore, our further contention that it is wrong to own any of these devices, to borrow them, or to be involved with them so as to hazard losing our own soul or the souls of our children. The Christian's attention is fixed on the Lord Jesus, because in Him alone are we "complete" (Col.2:9-10) and in Him alone can we be satisfied (John 6:35).

Competitive
Sports

Despite the fact that the strength of the youth is being constantly challenged by the pressures of worldly society to squander and waste its talents and energies in the area of competitive sports, we believe and confess that God has a higher calling for our dear young ones. ITim.4:12 challenges us: **"let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."** Competitive sports is an expression of the lower nature accenting pride and the love of praise, fan(-atic) worship, tribal "warfare", controlled aggression, and tremendous financial greed. It is the goal of Christian youth to dedicate themselves to God's will and Christian service. This cannot be accomplished effectively when the false god of competitive sports rules in the lives of the young. Christians reject the allurements of competitive sports because they weaken the priorities and claims of heaven upon the tender souls involved. Fulfillment is not found in athletics, but instead in standing **"perfect and complete in all the will of God."** (Colossians 4:12).

Fulfillment In
The Will of God