



Dear simplechurch Members,

As most of you know, memberships within simplechurch are renewed annually. As part of this membership renewal this year, simplechurch council, as a matter of transparency, feels it is important to notify you of matters which may have an impact on our local church and your membership within. As well, you'll see at the end of the letter that the council is proposing a process of discernment in response to these matters.

### **Background**

As a member church of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada (CMA), simplechurch, its members and staff are governed by the CMA's Statement Faith, Local Church Constitution and a variety of Statements and Policies approved by the General Assembly of the CMA. This relationship has been very helpful in enabling us to serve our mission as a local church.

In June of 2018, a Statement on Human Sexuality (Statement) and an associated Policy (Policy) on the practical outworking of this statement was passed at our national General Assembly and became legislated for all CMA churches, including simplechurch. Located in a city with a high population of LGBTQ+ peoples and varying views on sexual practice in general, the Statement and Policy have implications which impact both mission and practice.

As a diverse community with a range of theological views on many issues the council recognizes that some within simplechurch will find that the Statement and Policy aligns well with their convictions, others will find them disconcerting and still others will be confused; uncertain of how to respond and what to think.

While some may desire to simply avoid these documents, carrying on with life as usual, the truth is, this only works for those who find they align with their current convictions. For those who disagree or are confused, avoidance leaves them in a place of personal unrest, or brings them to a decision point wherein they feel they can no longer participate within our churches.

With the CMA formally adopting the Statement and Policy via the General Assembly, and given that simplechurch is a member church within the CMA, the simplechurch council feels it is in our best interest to convene a process where we can reflect on the Statement and Policy, discerning together their implications on and for our simplechurch community.

### **Process Plan and Desired Outcome**

In the weeks ahead, we will outline a more detailed course for this process of discernment. However, in general terms, our intention is that via teachings, readings, and opportunities to listen to those impacted our church will be given opportunity to reflect carefully and prayerfully on the matters raised by the Statement and Policy and the matter of Human Sexuality more generally.

Our prayer is that the outcome of this will enable our church and/or individual members to discern a way forward which is directed and informed by three frames:

1. **Theology/Scriptures** - The church is a community which seeks to be guided by God as revealed in the scriptures. Thus, a way forward seeks to wrestle with the question: *What do the scriptures say about our sexuality?*
2. **Church** - Jesus and the Apostles were very concerned that disciples live and act in a way which defers to others in love and pursues unity within the church. Thus, a way forward needs to also ask the question: *What will help us preserving unity in our church?*
3. **People** – As we work through this process, we also need to heed Jesus' call to love our neighbor, especially those impacted directly by the Statement and Policy. Thus, finally, discerning a way forward will take into account human experience and will ask the question: *What will enable us to best serve, counsel, and love those within and beyond our church?*

Our belief is that in holding these three frames in tension - What do the Scriptures teach? What will help us preserve unity in our church? What enables us to love, serve and reach people in Jesus' name? - individuals and our church corporately will be able to define their/our convictions and discern a way forward which is in keeping with those convictions.

It is highly doubtful that we will arrive at a place of homogenous thought, however, in bearing these three frames in mind and via the provision of God's Spirit, our prayer is that we will discern a way forward which is wise, courageous and loving.

### **Request of Current Members**

Finally, a word about your current status as a member. While some may find the policy incongruous with their current convictions, our request is that all members renew their membership in simplechurch for one further year in order to engage with willing and prayerful hearts in the process ahead. In this time, we need everyone at the table, ready to pray, study, listen and grow together.

### **Conclusion,**

In the weeks ahead, we will send out more information about the plan and process before us - which will be important. But more important than a process, are the hearts of those engaged. As we enter this season of discernment, please do so with prayer and expectancy. We are expecting that God will show up, enabling us a way forward which will honour our convictions - diverse as they may be - while equipping us with the capacity to love and serve both him and the city we call home.