



Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary

PLAN TO PROTECT® POLICY: A Protection Plan for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

Board Approval on the 10th day of August, 2018

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Plan to Protect[®] Policy for Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

1.01 Preamble

At Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary, we have joined ourselves together in Christ as a fellowship of believers covenanting to accept the Bible as the Word of God, promising to believe and practice its teachings rightly divided with the New Testament as our rule of faith and practice, government, and discipline, and agreeing to walk in the light to the best of our knowledge and ability.

We accept Christ's call to love God with all our being and to love our neighbour as Christ loved us. Therefore, we pledge ourselves to be open and to welcome all people, regardless of gender, race, age, culture, economic circumstance, family type or differences of ability.

All are welcome into this fellowship to share fully its life and ministry. In response to the grace which Christ has given us, we glorify God, we commit ourselves to growth in the Spirit and His word and we rejoice in the worth, gifts and dignity of every person as a child of God.

We know that Children, Youth and Vulnerable People are important to God and so they are very important to us. Children and Youth are not only the church of the future; they are a valuable part of the church today. Jesus reminds us that in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven we must have the faith of a little child.

However, our Children, Youth and seniors are also vulnerable. Sadly, because of their lacking strength, awareness, and knowledge, they are often taken advantage of and worse, victims of abuse. Therefore, it is imperative as a church that we be proactive in protecting them and in providing safe environments so that the intimacy in the relationship between Child/Youth and God remains secure.

We must, as well, protect those who serve our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. Our Ministry Personnel need the security of knowing that they are working in a setting where processes and procedures are in place to minimize any possibility of an erroneous accusation.

This Plan to Protect[®] Policy establishes the criteria for the provision of a safe environment for Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and Ministry Personnel.

1.02 Definitions

In this Policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Accused | Shall mean a person against whom a complaint of child abuse or sexual exploitation is made pursuant to the terms of this Policy |
| Act | Means the <i>Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act</i> , R.S.A. 2000, c C-12 (the "Act") |

Board	Means the Board of Deacons the highest functioning authority of the church
Child	Means a person under the age of 18 years; see also Youth
Complainant	Means a person who makes a complaint of child abuse or sexual exploitation under this Policy
Designated Screening Personnel	An individual designated and trained to screen Prospective Ministry Personnel. Tasks include processing applications, reference checks, conducting interviews and maintaining ministry personnel files
Hall Monitors	Ministry Personnel whose role is to walk hallways for surveillance and to randomly visit rooms where Children are being supervised to protect against false allegations
Ministry Lead	Individuals who have successfully completed the recruitment and screening process and who have been given the responsibility to give direction to programs or ministries for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. The term includes volunteer and all full-time, short-term or contract staff members receiving a salary.
Ministry Personnel	An individual who has successfully completed the recruitment and screening procedures of Plan to Protect [®] Policy and is now deemed to be a person who can be put in a Position of Trust with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. Ministry Personnel include screened volunteers, full-time, short-term or contract staff and pastoral staff whether or not they receive a salary
Ministry Personnel File	A file kept on each Prospective Ministry Personnel which includes the ministry application form, record of police records check, record of reference checks, and other documents related to the recruiting and supervision of Ministry Personnel
Occasional Observer	Individuals who visit and observe Ministry Personnel with ministry activities on rare occasions. This term includes Parents assisting their own children. Occasional Observers do not need to be screened and trained, however, their access to minors will be limited and they will never be placed in a position of trust with Children who are not their own. That means that they will not be asked to assume responsibility for Children and they will not be allowed or asked to take Children to the washroom
Parent	Shall mean the natural or adoptive Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a Child
Position of Trust	A Position of Trust is any position that requires its holder to enjoy the trust of those who elected or chose the holder. It includes any role wherein parents and or guardians have entrusted their loved one to your care i.e. teachers, helpers, assistants, supervisors, directors, leaders, caregivers, sponsors, etc. Violation of Position of Trust, in legal terms, refers to a situation where one person holds a position of authority over another person and uses that position to his or her advantage to commit a crime or to injury the victim in some way.

Liability for abuse of this position is not limited to criminal prosecution, and in some cases, a civil lawsuit may be brought as well.

Prospective Ministry Personnel Youth or adults associated with the church congregation either by membership or regular attendance as an adherent, and awaiting approval to become Ministry Personnel

Youth Means a Child aged 11 to 17 years

Vulnerable Adult A person who 18 years of age or older, because of his/her age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by a person or persons in Positions of Trust or authority relative to him/her.

1.03 Understanding Child Abuse

Definition of Abuse

It is critical for us to have a clear understanding of abuse, to be familiar with the definitions used when referring to it.

“Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health, or a child’s welfare.” (Faith Trust Institute, 2006)

Abuse is categorized as being physical, sexual, or emotional, involving neglect, harassment, improper touching and improper discipline.

Abuse of Vulnerable Adults is sometimes described as misuse of power and a violation of trust. Elder/Vulnerable Adult abuse can take place in the home, in other residential settings, or in the community.

Abusers can be family members, friends, staff or individuals in positions of trust or authority.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any act by the parent or guardian, which results in trauma or injury to any part of a child’s body. It is the most visible form of child abuse, and can happen once or many times. These injuries are often the result of unreasonable, severe corporal punishment of a child. If physical abuse keep up, the injuries to the child become more severe and it becomes more difficult to eliminate the abusive behaviour. Children often explain injuries by saying they had an accident while playing or they got it while fighting with a sibling.

Accidental injuries look different and are usually in different places from non-accidental injuries. This is especially true in infants because they do not move around much on their own. Injuries such as broken ribs and femurs, spiral fractures, facial bruising, acceleration/de-acceleration brain injuries (shaken baby syndrome), failure to thrive (dehydration and malnutrition) are taken very seriously. (Alberta Human Services)

Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse is the inappropriate exposure or subjection of a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour by a parent or guardian. (Alberta Human Services)

Sexual abuse can include:

- “non-touching” activities (e.g. obscene phone calls/conversations, indecent exposure or exhibitionism, masturbation in front of a child, deliberate exposure to others engaged in sexual activities, exposure to any forms of pornographic material)
- “sexual touching” activities (e.g. fondling a child, making a child touch an adult’s genital area, or sexual intercourse)
- “sexual exploitation” (e.g. engaging a child for prostitution, using a child in pornography or luring a child via the Internet for sexual purposes). In Alberta, children and youth under the age of 18 who are involved in prostitution are considered to be victims of sexual abuse, and have legislation to protect them. We have more information about sexual exploitation.
(Alberta Human Services)

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is an attack on the child’s self-concept and self-worth. It is a pattern of ongoing behaviour by the parent or guardian that seriously interferes with the healthy development or the mental or emotional functioning of the child. Emotional abuse often happens along with other forms of abuse, such as neglect or physical abuse. Emotional abuse is the result of:

- exposure to family violence in the home;
- exposure to chronic alcohol or drug use in the home;
- rejection;
- the child being ignored or isolated;
- threats, humiliation, unrealistic expectations, or inappropriate accusations/criticism;
- corruption (permitting a child to use alcohol or drugs, watch or participate in cruelty to animals, or participate in criminal activities); or
- negative exposure to someone with a mental or emotional condition (including suicidal or homicidal ideas) in the home.

Emotional injury is the least visible form of child abuse. In fact, a child may appear to be clean, well groomed and well fed. But the child may be sad, depressed, timid, angry or withdrawn. Emotional abuse has serious, long term effects on children and can often outlast the impact of neglect or physical injury. Listed below are some possible signs, of emotional abuse. (Alberta Human Services)

Neglect

Neglect is failing to provide age appropriate basic care such as food, clothing, shelter, love and affection, medical and dental care, education, and protection from harm. If the parent or guardian cannot or will not provide these things to a child, it is neglect. (Alberta Human Services)

Spiritual Abuse

We believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and affirm the importance of Christian evangelism. However, we do not believe that this justifies any means to fulfill that end. Hence, we disavow the use of any coercive techniques or manipulative appeals that bypass a person’s critical faculties, play on psychological weaknesses, undermine relationship with family or religious institutions, or mask the true nature of Christian conversion. While respecting the

individual integrity, intellectual honesty and academic freedom of other believers and skeptics, we seek to proclaim Christ openly. We reveal our own identity and purpose, our theological positions and sources of information, and we will not be intentionally misleading. Respect for human integrity means no false advertising, no personal aggrandizement from successfully persuading others to follow Jesus, and no overly emotional appeals which minimize reason and evidence.

Harassment

Repeated subtle or overt action, particularly by a person in a position of trust which causes the recipient to feel attacked, demeaned, intimidated or manipulated.

Discrimination

Discrimination is differential treatment based on a personal characteristic which has an adverse impact on an individual or group. Examples of personal characteristics include race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, faith or creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or handicap.

Discrimination robs people of their dignity and their ability to fulfill their capabilities. It is important to note that any person or group can discriminate and any person or group can be the target of discrimination.

Exposure to Domestic Violence

Children who live in homes where a parent or caretaker is experiencing abuse are commonly referred to as "child witnesses" or "children who are witnessing" domestic violence. Children's exposure to domestic violence typically falls into three primary categories: hearing a violent event; being directly involved as an eyewitness, intervening, or being used as a part of a violent event (e.g., being used as a shield against abusive actions); and or experiencing the aftermath of a violent event.

Children's exposure to domestic violence also may include being used as a spy to interrogate the adult victim, being forced to watch or participate in the abuse of the victim, and being used as a pawn by the abuser to coerce the victim into returning to the violent relationship. Some children are physically injured as a direct result of the domestic violence. Some perpetrators intentionally physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse their children in an effort to intimidate and control their partner. In addition to being exposed to the abusive behaviour, many children are further victimized by coercion to remain silent about the abuse, maintaining the "family secret." (Not Alone: You are not alone!

<http://www.enotalone.com/article/9996.html>)

1.04 Understanding the Church's Responsibility

We believe it is the responsibility of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary to provide a safe environment for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults who are in attendance at Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary's facilities or who participate in church sanctioned activities and programs wherever they may be carried out.

The Spiritual and Moral Responsibility of the Church

We recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care and we take our responsibility seriously.

Micah 6:8 presents this challenge, “He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (TNIV)

Micah suggests that the Lord requires three things of us:

- **To act justly** – we must work for justice, seeking to promote the truth and speak out on behalf of the vulnerable.
- **To love mercy** – compassion needs to be the bedrock of all our work.
- **To walk humbly with our God** – every area of our lives need to be marked by humility and righteousness. To act always with integrity.

The Bible outlines our spiritual responsibility to Children and Youth:

“If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6 TNIV)

“People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.” (Mark 10:13-16 TNIV)

“Avoid every kind of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:22 NIV)

“For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of others.” (2 Corinthians 8:21 TNIV)

The Ethical Responsibility of the Ministry

“The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified of all the United Nations Human Rights treaties. The treaty affirms and describes the fundamental human rights of all children (all human beings below the age of 18), and the governments that have ratified it have legally agreed to fulfill its provisions. The CRC forms the most comprehensive and well-established international standard for children's rights.”¹

The protection of children and youth is one of four themes throughout the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which entered into force as international law on 2 September 1990. To date, 193 countries have ratified the UNCRC and have included it in their own laws. These countries include every country in the world, except for the USA and Somalia.

“The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ... requires us to provide special protection and assistance to children to enable them to reach their full potential as adults. While parents are primarily responsible for ensuring a child’s rights are upheld, government and community also have an important role to play in protecting children.”²

¹ Canadian Children’s Rights Council 2007

² Government of British Columbia 2007, 5

All articles in the UNCRC apply to all children and youth of all backgrounds. A fundamental philosophy behind the convention is that *children have the same inherent value as adults and are their equals*.

The Civil and Legal Responsibility of the Church

We recognize that providing a safe place for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults is also a legal requirement. We have a legal responsibility to ensure that a plan for protecting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults is in place and is diligently followed.

Our legal responsibility includes being accountable for the actions of our employees and volunteers, that as an organization we could be held vicariously liable for their actions.

This policy and the guidelines contained within it are to help us in fulfilling our responsibilities to provide as safe and nurturing environment as possible for Children, Youth and Vulnerable adults. In partnership with Parents, we, as a church, seek to provide quality care and instruction to families and in this way, promote spiritual growth at every age level.

1.05 General Guidelines and Principles for Reducing the Risk of Abuse³

The following are general guidelines and principles reflected in this document:

1. When RISK increases, supervision should also increase.

- a) For the protection of our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, supervision of all Ministry Personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs by Ministry Leads;

2. RISK increases as isolation increases.

- a) Avoid Isolation -- Where possible, all meetings with Vulnerable Persons are to be with a group or in pairs rather than be alone.
- b) It is preferable to have more than one Screened Adult present when working with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. If the other adult cannot be in the same room, it is best to have them close by in the same building and aware of your meeting, acting in the role of a Hall Monitor.
- c) Your objective should be to meet in an open, public space rather than a closed, private space. A hallway is better than a secluded room. An office is better than a person's home. A public restaurant is better than a shopping mall.
- d) When meeting, an open door is better than a closed door; a door with a window is better than a solid door.

3. RISK increases as accountability and adherence to policies decrease.

- a) At all times (where possible) make others aware of your activities and your whereabouts, particularly when meeting with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.
- b) A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year (September) to ensure training, the updating of files, and the physical environment are compliant with this policy.
- c) Regular meetings with a Ministry Lead are to be arranged to discuss the ongoing nature and actions of the ministry.
- d) If a person is involved in a situation where a boundary is violated, or something occurs that is out of the ordinary or could be misinterpreted, or where such a

³ Adapted from *Reducing the Risk*

violation or occurrence is alleged, he or she should immediately report it and discuss it with a supervisor. If the Ministry Lead is unwilling, unable, or unavailable for discussion, he or she should seek out a Board Member or Senior Pastor to discuss the issue. Such incidents should be immediately reported to the insurer if appropriate.

- e) Activities that could easily lead to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as allowing unsupervised internet access to Children or Youth on computers, vehicle transportation by Ministry Personnel alone with an unrelated Child or Youth, or improperly supervised sleepovers, are prohibited without express written permission of at least one Parent of the Child or Youth and the Program Lead.
- f) All local Health and Safety Standards must be adhered to.

4. RISK increases when there is an imbalance of power, authority, influence and control between a potential abuser and potential victim.

- a) Corporal punishment is prohibited.
- b) Report all allegations and suspicions of Vulnerable Person maltreatment.

5. Key to demonstrating due diligence is by retaining documentation.

- a) Registration forms, Letters of Informed Consent wherein Parents give written permission for their Children or Youth to participate in off-site group activities, and attendance records will be gathered and kept on file.
- b) Incident reports will be written and submitted on all accidents and injuries.

SECTION II

POLICY ON PROTECTION PROCEDURES

2.01 Ministry Personnel Recruitment and Screening

Process

1. It is recommended that a Screening Committee (a subset of the Ministerial Committee) oversee the screening of all Ministry Personnel. Individuals in a Position of Trust of confidential information must sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix 13).
2. All current and active Volunteers as of 2016 are to submit to the recruitment and screening process. The recruitment and screening process includes:
 - Being an Attending Member of the church
 - Ministry Personnel Application Form (Appendix 1)
 - Signing the Code of Conduct
 - CPIC Criminal Record Clearance check and Vulnerable Sector Search
 - Plan to Protect® Orientation Training
3. All New Prospective Volunteers are to submit to the recruitment and screening process managed by Plan to Protect®. The recruitment and screening process includes:
 - Being an Attending Member of the church in good standing
 - Ministry Personnel Application Form (Appendix 1)
 - Signing the Statement of Faith & Beliefs
 - Reference checks
 - Phone Interview
 - CPIC Criminal Record Clearance check and Vulnerable Sector Search
 - Plan to Protect® Orientation Training
 - Final approval from the Senior Pastor and Ministerial Committee
4. Ministry Personnel must complete the recruitment and screening process prior to being placed in a Position of Trust.
5. Ministry Personnel who serve Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults must have a personnel file kept with church records. These files are to be kept permanently.

Qualifications for New Ministry Personnel

1. Individuals wanting to work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults must be members of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary or have regularly attended the church (worship services and/or participated in a Ministry Team) for at least six months. Reference checks must be received from at least two individuals, including one from their previous pastor.

2. Ministry Personnel serving with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults are members or adherents in good standing who support the vision, values and constitution of the church. They also support and are submissive to the leadership of the Pastors and Board of the church.
3. Individuals who have been accused, or convicted, or are under the suspicion of crimes against Children and/or Youth, or who have been convicted of violent crimes or other relevant crimes will not have any involvement in ministries or programs where Children or Youth participate.

Ministry Application Form

1. Prospective Ministry Personnel are to complete a Ministry Personnel Application Form (Appendix 1). Youth wanting to volunteer as leaders are to complete the Ministry Personnel Application Form for Youth Working with Children (Appendix 2).
 - A verifiable witnessed signature is required for the protection of all parties
 - Individuals who transfer from another church unknown to Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary Leadership must include contact information or a reference from a pastoral staff member of their previous church
 - In accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) regulations, the Ministry Personnel Application Form must include the reason for which the information is being collected
2. Ministry Personnel Application Forms are to be kept confidential and available only to the Ministry Lead, Pastors or Designated Screening Personnel.
 - Completed Ministry Personnel Application Forms are to be kept on file permanently and in a secure location

Reference Checks

1. It is recommended that the Screening Committee will conduct at least two qualitative reference checks on all Prospective Ministry Personnel (Appendix 3).
 - Prospective Ministry Personnel must sign a liability release before reference checks are conducted
 - References provided must fit with the acceptable categories for Adults and for Youth who want to work with Children
 - Reference checks may be conducted by telephone or in person to confirm the suitability and appointment of prospective Ministry Personnel

Interview

Interviews, for Prospective Ministry Personnel who are not known to the leadership of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary, will be conducted by members of the screening committee.

Police Records Checks (Canadian Police Information Clearance)

1. CPIC checks and Vulnerable Sector Scans (aka Police Record checks) must be conducted on all ministry personnel serving Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.
 - Police records checks are to be renewed every three (3) years

- Police records checks are to be conducted on all Ministry Personnel 16 years of age and older and are to be kept on file permanently
2. If a CPIC check or Vulnerable Sector Scan is returned “NOT CLEAR” the prospective candidate will be asked to do one of the following:
 - a. either submit to a Criminal Record Check with fingerprinting verification and to submit to disclosure and verification of the crimes committed that he/she has been convicted of; or
 - b. withdraw their application from serving in a position of leadership or a Position of Trust with Children, Youth or Vulnerable Persons.

Note: Without verification of convictions and without a clear vulnerable sector scan individuals cannot be placed in a Position of Trust with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Training

1. Abuse prevention education and training is required for all Ministry Personnel serving with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults and must be completed prior to ministry placement.
2. Training by designated trainers is to include a review of the Plan to Protect[®] Policy and procedures. All Ministry Personnel are to affirm that they have read the Plan to Protect[®] Policy, that they understand it and the procedures that pertain to their area of ministry. Ministry Personnel will be educated about their legal obligation to report suspected abuse and to recognize and identify the symptoms of abuse and molestation.
3. All Ministry Personnel, Pastors, Ministry Leads and Designated Screening Personnel are required to attend Orientation training prior to ministry placement and the Refresher training sessions at least once a year after that.
4. Attendance is to be taken at training courses and noted in the personnel file for each Ministry Personnel. All Ministry Personnel must sign a ministry agreement form (Appendix 4) confirming they have read, understood and are willing to comply with the Plan to Protect[®] policies and procedures.

Approval

1. All Ministry Personnel are to be approved by the Senior Pastor and the Ministerial Committee upon completion of the recruitment and screening process. Approval should not be granted unless the screening process is complete and carefully reviewed.
 - Approval must be signed and dated
2. The recruitment and screening process must be completed within a 3 month period of time.
 - Applicants who have not fully completed the recruitment and screening process will not be placed in a Position of Trust
 - Access to Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults will be limited until final approval is received

2.02 Child Protection Procedures

The following procedures are in place for ministries including but not limited to: Sunday School, and all other children's ministry programs designated for Children birth to grade six.

Supervision of Ministry Personnel

For the protection of our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, supervision of all Ministry Personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs by Ministry Leads and / or a Pastor.

Plan to Protect® Program Maintenance

A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year (September) to ensure training, the updating of files, and the physical environment are compliant with this policy.

Ministry Personnel / Child Ratios

Room settings should comply with established ratios for Ministry Personnel and Children at all times. Established ratios are:

1. Two Ministry Personnel for every 10 toddlers and pre-schoolers (15 months old to 5 years of age)
2. Two Ministry Personnel for every 6-20 elementary age Children (6 year olds to gr. 6)
3. Ratios for off-site trips should be two Ministry Personnel for every 10 Children, or half of recommended classroom ratios stated above.

Supervision of Children

1. To provide adequate supervision of Children, one (1) of the following must be in place:
 - A minimum of two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel present for supervision, except in the event of an emergency OR
 - One Ministry Personnel present with the door open with Hall Monitors circulating periodically from room to room
2. Ministry Personnel between the ages of 11 and 17 may assist only under adult Ministry Personnel supervision. Ministry Personnel must be 18 years of age or older to supervise Children and Youth alone in a room. In both situations, the door must remain open with Hall Monitors circulating periodically from room to room.

Occasional Observers

Occasional Observers who join a group of Children will have their attendance recorded and kept on file with the group attendance for that day. Visitors will be clearly identified and if they have not been screened and approved, they will not be placed in a Position of Trust with Children.

Registration Forms and Personal Information Protection

Child / Youth Registration Forms (Appendix 5/7) will be available for activities where Children and Youth are participating. A release and permission statement will be included on all participation forms releasing Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary from unforeseen and accidental injuries along with contact information in case of an accident. A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulate the purpose and extent for collecting

personal information of Children and our commitment to protect the personal information on the forms.

1. Forms are to be copied and the copies taken on all off-site events in case emergency medical assistance is required and the parent cannot be notified. Original forms are to be filed and kept permanently in a secure location.
2. The registration form will not replace specific consent and authorization forms for activities that involve an elevated level of risk including off-site activities.
3. It is the responsibility of Ministry Personnel and their teams to ensure that forms are completed and submitted for all participants. Reasonable effort is to be made to keep registration information updated and current.
4. Registration forms must be kept permanently under lock and key.

Receiving and Releasing Children

For Children Birth to Kindergarten (up to and including age 5):

1. The receiving and releasing Children under the age of 6 will be closely monitored. A mandatory sign-in and sign-out form is to be used for all programs.
2. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present.
3. Children will only be released into the care of the Child's Parent or designate utilizing a signature, security number or identification card.
4. Parents and visitors are not to enter the nursery or preschool area when picking up their Child unless requested to do so.

For Children Grade 1 to 2 (ages 6 to 7):

1. Children are to be received in the designated room by Ministry Personnel. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present to receive them. Children are to remain in the room until the Parent or designate arrives to pick them up and the Child demonstrates recognition of the Parent or designate.

For Children Grade 3 to 6 (ages 8 to 11):

1. Children are received in the designated room by Ministry Personnel. Children are not to be dropped off or left in a room without Ministry Personnel present to receive them.
2. Children may be released on their own or be picked up by a Parent.

Attendance

1. Attendance of Children is to be taken each time a group or program is in session. These attendance records are to be kept on file permanently.
2. Attendance records must include the date, classroom, age/grade of students, Child's first and last name, full names of all Ministry Personnel and Occasional Observer attending on that date.

Washroom Guidelines

Parents are to be encouraged to deal with their Child's toileting needs prior to the start of each program or worship service.

For Infants and Toddlers:

1. Diaper changing procedures are to be clearly posted in the nursery diapering station (Appendix 6).
2. Diaper changing is to be done only by Parents. Ministry Personnel will notify Parents if a Child needs a diaper change while they are in the care of Ministry Personnel.

For Preschool Children:

1. Preschool Children are not to go to the washroom alone.
2. One of the following will be adhered to when accompanying preschool Children to the washroom:
 - Two (2) Ministry Personnel escort a group of Children to the washroom OR
 - One (1) Ministry Personnel escort a group of Children to the washroom with one (1) Hall Monitor appointed to assist with washroom and security duties.
3. Ministry Personnel are never to be alone with a Child in an unsupervised washroom and they are never to go into a cubicle with a Child and shut the door.
4. When a preschool Child needs assistance in a washroom, Ministry Personnel may only enter the washroom cubicle to assist following these guidelines:
 - The outside washroom door must be propped open and the adult Ministry Personnel must stand in an open cubicle,
 - The second Ministry Personnel (or hall monitor) must be at the outside washroom door with line of sight on the Ministry Personnel offering assistance.
 - Ministry Personnel will take into consideration the privacy of the Child.

For Elementary Children:

1. Elementary boys and girls are not to be sent to the washroom alone but should be accompanied by a buddy and Ministry Personnel.
2. Ministry Personnel will escort the Children to the washroom and prop the door open and remain outside the washroom door and wait for the Children before escorting them back to the room.
3. Ministry Personnel are not to be alone with Children in an unsupervised washroom and are never to enter into a cubicle with a Child and shut the door.

Architectural Precautions

Recognizing that there are many storage areas within the church, elevated precautions will be taken to monitor these areas. Storage closets and doors must be locked at all times except when in use. When doors are unlocked, additional Hall Monitors will be on duty to monitor these areas.

1. All windows in doors in Children's program areas are never to be covered in any way so to keep clear sight lines into rooms.
2. All electrical outlets are to be kept covered when not in use.
3. Doors of rooms and closets must be locked when not in use during children's programs.

Proper Display of Affection

Appropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that Children need appropriate displays of affection that reflect pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love, appropriate touch of Children will be age and developmentally appropriate. We encourage Ministry Personnel to:
 - Hold a preschool Child who is crying,
 - Speak to a Child at eye level and listen with your eyes as well as your ears,
 - Hold a Child's hand when speaking, listening or walking with him or her to an activity,
 - Gently hold the Child's shoulder or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behaviour,
 - Put your arm around the shoulder of a Child when comforting or quieting is needed,
 - Pat a Child on the head, hand, shoulder or back to affirm him or her.
2. All touch must be done in view of others.

Inappropriate Touch:

1. Recognizing that the innocence of Children must be protected, Ministry Personnel will be made aware that certain actions are deemed inappropriate and will not be permitted. Ministry Personnel are not to:
 - Kiss a Child or coax a Child to kiss you,
 - Engage in extended hugging and tickling,
 - Hold a Child's face when talking to or disciplining the Child,
 - Touch a Child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (strictly prohibited except in cases of diapering and assisting preschoolers as outlined in washroom procedures),
 - Carry older Children and do not allow them to sit on your lap,
 - Have prolonged physical contact with a Child.
2. Ministry Personnel are not to be left alone with a Child.

Discipline & Classroom Management

1. The following form of punishment will not be permitted:
 - Corporal punishment of a Child by a staff person, student or volunteer
 - Deliberate harsh or degrading measures to be used on a Child that would humiliate a child or undermine a Child's self-respect
 - Deprivation of a Child of basic needs
 - Locking or confining a Child in a room separate from other Children or Adults
2. All discipline and group management will be conducted in a loving and caring environment. All attempts will be made to prevent discipline problems from arising and to avoid the need for remedial discipline. All attempts are to be taken to adhere to the following.

Preventive Discipline:

- Create a loving, caring atmosphere,

- To gain respect, you must grant respect,
- Model self-discipline and structure in your own life,
- Prepare exciting and interesting activities with short transitions in between,
- Arrange your environment for Children and for learning,
- Establish and communicate realistic expectations for the Children,
- Be sure the activities that you provide are meaningful and age-appropriate,
- Be fair and consistent with all Children,
- Be sure your focus is on positive actions and reward positive behaviour,
- Be aware of Children with special needs and bring their needs to the attention of the Ministry Lead.

Remedial Discipline:

- Deal with problems individually,
- Explain to the Child why the behaviour is unacceptable and instruct them in how to do it correctly,
- Redirect the Child to positive action,
- Explain the consequences of unacceptable behaviour by defining the correct way to behave as well as the result of the wrong behaviour,
- Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the Child.

3. Group rules will be established to clearly communicate the expectations required of Children.

Some suggested rules are:

- One voice talking at a time, and always use inside voices,
- Use good manners,
- Respect each other,
- Quiet hands get answered,
- Obey directions the first time,
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself,
- Be friendly.

2.03 Youth Protection Procedures

The following policies and procedures are in place for ministries including but not limited to: Sunday School, Youth Camp, youth discipleship, and all youth ministry programs designated for youth 12 – 18 years in age.

Youth Ministry Personnel Standards

Lifestyle

1. For the protection of our Youth, Ministry Personnel are to be committed to growing in every area of their lives through engaging in various practices and experiences that keep them connected to God and becoming more like Christ.
2. Ministry Personnel are to be role models of integrity at all times. They are to refrain from activities that are illegal or could be considered morally and biblically questionable.

Contacting Opportunities

1. Ministry Personnel are encouraged to meet with Youth only during the parameters of ministry programming.
2. Ministry Personnel are to avoid any activity that would involve isolation and meet in group settings with a team member.
3. The Ministry Lead must pre-approve Ministry Personnel that do one-on-one mentoring or counselling activity.
4. One-on-one mentoring sanctioned by the church must be done in public settings and only under the following conditions:
 - The Ministry Lead is informed of the time and place of the meeting prior to the meeting, and,
 - Parental permission is granted with written documentation, and,
 - When separate transportation is arranged (avoiding isolation);
 - Documentation will be maintained and filed including written permission from Parents and notification to Ministry Lead.

Open Door Policy

Ministry Personnel working with Youth must not have one-on-one or small group meetings behind closed doors. It is required that the door remains open or that the meeting take place in a room with an unobstructed window in the door.

Physical Contact

1. Physical contact guidelines are to be posted in Youth rooms.
2. Ministry Personnel must be made aware of what constitutes appropriate touch, such as:
 - One arm hugs
 - Shoulder to shoulder hugs
 - Touch on the back or shoulder
3. Ministry Personnel must refrain from inappropriate touch at all times, such as:
 - Chest-to-chest hugging
 - Extended hugging
 - Over exuberant affection
 - Lap sitting
 - Kissing
 - Touching of thighs, knees, back rubs or inappropriate spots of the body

4. Ministry Personnel must be cognizant of conduct that could be misinterpreted, such as:
 - Horseplay
 - Tickling
 - Extended backrubs

Dating

Ministry Personnel working with Youth may not pursue a dating relationship with a student.

Youth Ministry Programming

Plan to Protect® Program Maintenance

A strategy for program maintenance will be developed and reviewed at the beginning of each ministry year (September) to ensure training, the updating of files and the physical environment are compliant with this policy.

Ministry Personnel / Student Ratios

1. Programs for Youth should comply with the following established staffing ratios:
 - Two Ministry Personnel for every 16 “Jr. High” Youth (gr. 7 to 8)
 - Two Ministry Personnel for every 20 “Sr. High” Youth (gr. 9 to 12)
2. For high-risk activities, ratios should be adjusted to two Ministry Personnel for every 5 Youth.
3. There must be at least two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events. Events with mixed genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
4. It is recommended there be at least a five (5) year age difference between Ministry Personnel and the Youth they supervise.

Supervision of Ministry Personnel

The supervision of Ministry Personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits to rooms and programs by Ministry Leads.

Registration Forms and Personal Information Protection

Child/Youth Registration Forms (Appendix 5/7) will be available for activities where Children and Youth are participating. A release and permission statement will be included on all participation forms releasing Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary from unforeseen and accidental injuries along with contact information in case of an accident. A statement will be included on all registration forms which stipulate the purpose and extent for collecting personal information of Children/Youth and our commitment to protect the personal information on the forms.

1. Forms are to be copied and the copies taken on all off-site events in case emergency medical assistance is required and the parent cannot be notified. Original forms are to be filed and kept permanently in a secure location.
2. The registration form will not replace specific consent and authorization forms for activities that involve an elevated level of risk including off-site activities.

3. It is the responsibility of personnel and their teams to ensure that forms are completed and submitted for all participants. Reasonable effort is to be made to keep registration information updated and current.
4. Registration forms must be kept permanently under lock and key.

Attendance

1. Attendance of Youth is to be taken each time a group or program is in session. These attendance records are to be kept on file permanently.
2. Attendance records must include the date, classroom, age/grade of students, first and last name of the youth, full names of all Ministry Personnel and Occasional Observer attending on that date.

Planning for Safety

All Ministry Personnel must ensure a safe environment in their planning and evaluating of all activities. Safety precautions are to be communicated to Youth.

2.04 Vulnerable Adult Protection Procedures

The following procedures are in place for programs and ministries where Vulnerable Adults are in attendance and/or for opportunities where Vulnerable Adults are visited and ministered to.

Planning for Safety

All Ministry Personnel must ensure a safe environment in their planning and evaluating of all activities with Vulnerable Adults. Safety precautions are to be communicated to the Vulnerable Adults and also to their care givers and family members.

Supervision of Vulnerable Adults

1. Programs for Vulnerable Adults must comply with the following established staffing:
 - One Ministry Personnel for every 10 Vulnerable Adults for on-site programs
 - One Ministry Personnel for every 5 Vulnerable Adults for off-site trips and activities
2. There must be at least two (2) unrelated Ministry Personnel at all events and for all visitation including home, nursing centre visits and hospital visits or the door must remain open with family members, nursing staff, or caregivers in the home or facility.
3. Events with mixed genders must be supervised by both male and female Ministry Personnel.
4. Caution and professional attitudes are to be observed in all interactions.
5. Pastoral ministry should be limited to the professional section of the church i.e. office or board room, or in a public place i.e. coffee shop.
6. When visiting Vulnerable Adults in private homes, hospitals and nursing centres, please ensure that a family member or personal care giver is also present or, conduct visitation in teams of two adults. In hospitals and nursing centers do visitation in teams of two or leave the door open. Avoid scenarios where you are left alone with Vulnerable Adults.

Supervision of Ministry Personnel

The supervision of Ministry Personnel will be intentional and will take place through formal and informal visits by Ministry Leads.

Personal Care

Personal Care should be the responsibility of care givers and family members, not Ministry Personnel.

Note: Caregivers and family members may look forward to the respite of Ministry Personnel coming to visit the Vulnerable. It is at the Ministry Personnel's discretion if they wish to provide this extra level of care; however, at no time should Ministry Personnel be left alone in a home or behind closed doors with Vulnerable Persons.

2.05 High Risk Activities: Off-Site, Water Activities, Overnight Events, and Transportation

Off-Site Activities:

1. All off-site activities must be pre-approved by a Pastor with parents being notified at least one (1) week prior to the outing utilizing the Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix 12)
2. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each Child/Youth participating in off-site events. Forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during off-site activities with a copy of the completed forms filed in Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary's office. The originals are to be kept on file permanently (Child, Appendix 5; Youth, Appendix 7).
3. All off-site activities are to be supervised by a minimum of two (2) unrelated adult Ministry Personnel. Off-site activities with mixed genders must be supervised by at least two (2) unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender.

Shower and Change Room Guidelines

These guidelines are in place with such activities as water events during VBS in mind.

1. Two adult screened individuals must be present together in the dressing or locker room with Children while they are showering or changing; screened Personnel must not be alone with Children in this setting.
2. Out of respect for the Children / Youth, and to maintain a high standard of professionalism, screened Personnel will announce their arrival prior to entering a dressing or locker room.
3. Screened Personnel are not permitted to change or shower at the same time as Children / Youth.
4. Separate facilities should be designated for both genders or, if these are not available, separate showering / changing times will be arranged.
5. If a Child is too young or is unable to dress him / herself, he / she should be aided by a Parent / guardian or their designate.
 - a. Appropriate facilities should be provided where Parents, guardians and / or attendants can assist Children in getting dressed.

- b. If assistance in the dressing room is requested from someone other than a Parent or guardian, attendant or Child, they must only assist within sight of other Personnel or Parents and in a manner where only necessary physical contact occurs.
6. The use of photographic or video recording devices, including cell phones, is prohibited in dressing or locker rooms at all times.

Retreats and Overnight Events:

1. All retreats and overnight events must be pre-approved by the Youth Pastor.
2. Proper written consent and medical release forms utilizing the Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix 12) are required for each Child or Youth participating in overnight events. Forms must be kept in the Ministry Lead's possession during trips and events and a copy filed in the office Manager's office at the church. The originals are to be kept on file permanently (Child, Appendix 5; Youth Appendix 7).
3. All overnight activities with mixed genders must be supervised by at least two (2) unrelated, adult Ministry Personnel of opposite gender. There must be a minimum ratio of two (2) Ministry Personnel for every ten Children or Youth. Ministry Personnel are to be assigned a specific group of Children or Youth for whom they are responsible to supervise. Female Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for female Children / Youth and male Ministry Personnel will be assigned responsibility for male Children / Youth.
4. Youth attending retreats and overnight events will not be allowed to leave the event. Any exceptions must be added to the permission form signed by the Parent.
5. Female and male Youth are not allowed in each other's rooms or tents for any reason during retreats and overnight events and they are not permitted to sleep in mixed company.

Overnight Housing Including Conferences, Camps, Hotels and Motels:

1. For the protection of our Children and Youth, the following guidelines will be followed prior to all off-site trips where overnight accommodations must be secured:
 - A notice with an attached Informed Letter of Consent (Appendix 12) will be sent home to the family advising them that an overnight trip is being planned, which requires the team to stay in a conference centre/camp/hotel/motel. Make sure to note that:
 - a. precautions are being taken to minimize the risk and to raise the level of safety provided for their Children and Youth, and,
 - b. specific sleeping arrangements have been planned.
 - The Parent or guardian must return the signed and witnessed Informed Letter of Consent which includes the required liability shields.
2. Youth must always be housed in small groups of the same gender.
3. All Personnel travelling with Children and Youth must complete the screening and training process outlined in this policy prior to departure. Screened and trained Personnel who are placed in a position of trust with Children and Youth must be known by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary for six months.
4. Any individuals travelling with the team who do not qualify as screened Personnel should have separate sleeping arrangements.

5. When travel plans require overnight housing, it is strongly recommended that housing be arranged in the homes of screened and approved billets, or in a conference centre, camp, or church where Children and/or Youth can stay together, and where more than one screened worker can be assigned to each common sleeping area. (Refer to policy on “Billeting and Hosting”.) When this is not possible and it is necessary that the group stay in hotels or motels, plans need to be made so that Children and Youth have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from other adults. In your plans, it is strongly encouraged that:
 - Hotel rooms be all together in one wing of the hotel or motel; and
 - Parents be encouraged to accompany the team, assigning family members to hotel rooms; or,
 - Request the availability of suites with two or three bedrooms per suite and assign two Children/Youth to a separate room, set apart from the two adult screened Personnel; or,
 - Assign two unrelated adult screened workers to a hotel room with two or more Children/Youth; or,
 - In hotel or motel rooms with adjoining doors, assign one screened adult with two Children/Youth in each room. For accountability purposes, the door separating adjoining rooms must be kept ajar or open at all times. Children and Youth should have distinctly separate sleeping arrangements from other adults.
 - Screened Personnel are never to be alone in a room with a Child or Youth.
6. Children should not be left alone in hotel rooms.
7. At no time should Personnel sleep in the same bed with a Child, Youth or Vulnerable person.
8. Curfews should be established and enforced.

Transportation:

1. When planning off-site activities, Parents are to be encouraged to drop off and pick up their Children and Youth at the event location. Commercial school carriers are to be used whenever possible.
2. Our first concern in transportation is the safety of our Youth. Drivers must obey all the rules of the road including the speed limits. Reckless or unsafe driving will not be tolerated.
3. All Ministry Personnel drivers transporting Youth during Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary activities must complete the following prior to the youth event:
 - Be pre-approved by the Ministry Lead,
 - Provide a copy of their valid driver’s license,
 - Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance policy, and,
 - Have a minimum of five (5) years driving experience in good standing.
4. The number of occupants in vehicles transporting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults during Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary sponsored activities must not exceed the number of seat belts and each Child must be in age appropriate safety restraints. Seat belts must be worn by everyone and remain fastened at all times the vehicle is in operation.

5. At least two (2) Ministry Personnel must be in each vehicle transporting Children during Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary sponsored activities. Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults must never be left alone in a vehicle. Exceptions to this policy should only happen when Program Directors and Parents are informed, and there is more than one child/youth in the vehicle, avoiding isolation.
6. The 'Trips and Off-site Travel Form' (Appendix 8) will accompany the group with the original left in Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary's office and filed permanently consisting of:
 - Names and phone numbers of all participants
 - Location of event and phone number(s)
 - Drivers and vehicles involved

2.06 Health & Safety Guidelines

First Aid:

1. Ministry Leads and Ministry Personnel are to be encouraged to be certified and trained in first aid.
2. The names and contact information of individuals who are certified in first aid are to be posted in the children's and youth program areas for easy access with a Master List maintained by the Office Manager.
3. Ministry Leads must be informed of any individual(s) having severe allergies. The information will be posted in the children's and youth departments for easy access and Ministry Personnel who have the individual(s) in their care will be informed.

Illness:

1. An individual who is ill and could therefore expose others to illness is not to be received into the nursery or classroom. Factors and symptoms to consider are:
 - Fever, unusual fatigue, irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose and eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat
 - Individual(s) with a known communicable disease

Medications:

1. Ministry Personnel are not to give or apply any medications. Parents are to be contacted and should administer all medications. The following exceptions will be made for full day program and overnight events:
 - Only medications with a Doctor's prescription on the bottle will be given / administered. In this case written parental permission is required and a log will be kept, signed and dated, of the medication that was distributed (Appendix 14b).
 - Personnel are not to give over-the-counter medication without written authorization from physician.
 - Parents must complete the medication forms prior to the event and sign the dosage instructions (Appendix 14).
 - Medication given to designated medical personnel or the Ministry Lead on duty.
 - The medication is to be returned to the parent or guardian and the medication forms will be signed by the parent/guardian at the time of return.
 - The original forms will be filed permanently.

2. Medication is not to be left in a classroom. When an individual brings medication, the medication is to be kept in the possession of the Ministry Lead or their designate. This also applies to non-prescription substances such as tobacco and cigarettes brought by Youth to events.
3. In the extreme case where Epi-pens and puffers are needed for allergies or asthma, written instructions are to be provided by the Parent or guardian to the Ministry Lead. Requests should be written, signed, dated and filed permanently.
4. Topical medications for diaper changing purposes are to be used only when instructed and provided by the Parent or guardian.

Dealing with Cuts or Injuries Involving Blood:

1. Blood pathogen policies will be posted in the departments.
2. When an individual is injured, they are to be separated from others. The area where the injury occurred or where any blood may have dropped on the floor or toys is also to be isolated.
3. Ministry Personnel need to ensure that no other individuals have had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.
4. Non-latex gloves are to be used when bandaging the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.
5. Extreme care will be taken in cleaning up all blood and bloody bandages and the safe and secure removal of waste and disposal of gloves to a secure waste removal container.
6. Hands are to be washed carefully with sterilizing soap available in the first aid kit.
7. When ministering to individuals with HIV or Aids, specific guidelines for the education and care of these individuals will be developed and followed (Appendix 9).

Emergencies:

1. Emergency evacuation procedures will be reviewed semi-annually by Pastors. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom stating the planned route of escape to the nearest exit.
2. Pastors, in cooperation with the Ministry Lead, will arrange for annual fire and evacuation drills.
3. A first aid kit will be kept in each classroom with Ministry Personnel being educated on the kit's contents. Each kit will contain a pair of disposable non-latex gloves, disinfectant towelettes, two or three 4" x 4" gauze pads for blood absorption, small scissors and band-aids.
4. A Parent will be contacted when an injury, accident or medical emergency occurs. Incident Reports are to be completed for any and all accidents. Injuries are to be reported to the Ministry Lead (Appendix 10).

2.07 Anti-Bullying and Zero Tolerance

Our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults have a right to a caring, respectful and safe church environment. An anti-bullying policy will therefore be in effect at all times and will be clearly communicated and enforced among the Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. All Program Personnel will take action to prevent bullying, teach against it, and assist and

support Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults who are being bullied. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

Bullying will be defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated.

Types of Bullying:

- Verbal Bullying
- Social Bullying
- Physical Bullying
- Cyber Bullying
- Racial Bullying
- Homophobic Bullying
- Sexual Harassment

Procedure for Dealing with Bullying:

- Bullying, of any kind, will not be accepted or tolerated.
- Any incidents, reports or suspicions of bullying will be acknowledged, reviewed and dealt with appropriately and immediately.
- All incidents, reports or suspicions will be reported immediately to the Ministry Lead.
- Appropriate action will take place based on the situation. Possible action may include, but is not limited to:
 1. Complete incident report after each incident
 2. Notify both sets of parents after each individual incident
 3. Provide a warning that bullying will not be tolerated
 4. Suspension for one day/event if bullying persists
 5. Suspension for three days/events after next incident
 6. Expel the student if the bullying does not stop
 7. If necessary/appropriate, contact and consult with police.
- All attempts will be made to work towards reconciliation and change of behavior with the bully or bullies.
- Counseling and support will be recommended and if at all possible provided for the victim of bullying.

2.08 Computer and Internet

1. Computers accessible to the general public will be placed in open areas where the screen is easily visible. Users will be held accountable through the use of a sign-in/sign-out sheets, and if the computer has network access, a user password.
2. Internet filters will be installed on each computer to limit access to adult content.
3. The office manager will appoint an authorized computer system's individual who will periodically review the browser history as well as the documents downloaded for questionable material.
4. An 'Acceptable computer Use Policy' will be developed and posted near the public-accessed computer.

2.09 Communication via Social Media, Email and Text Messaging

Social Media, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Tumblr, YouTube, Skype, etc., as well as email and texting, will be used to improve communication, to promote and advertise church activities and to arrange face-to-face meetings. Ministry Personnel will refrain from using Social Media networks for relationship-building or counselling, particularly with Children and Youth.

1. Communication with Children 12 years of age and under is prohibited with the exceptions as stated below.
 - a. Ministry Personnel may communicate with Children via email with written parental permission (Appendix 7), and copying parents/guardians on all emails.
 - b. Ministry Personnel will not initiate contact with Children or Youth under the age of 13 via text or using Social Media.
 - c. Communication should also be copied to your Ministry Leader or co-worker.
2. Communication with Youths 13 years of age and older via Social Media, telephone and texting is permitted under the following conditions:
 - a. Communication with a Youth via email, text, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or other online social networks will be monitored closely and only used with written parental permission. (Appendix 7)
 - b. Ministry Personnel may communicate with Youth via email with written parental permission (Appendix 7), agreeing to copy all emails to parents/guardians.
 - c. Ministry Personnel will not initiate contact with Children or Youth under the age of 13 via text or using Social Media. Ministry Personnel may contact Youth aged 13-17 via text or Social Media with written parental permission (Appendix 7) and copying another leader on the text, or using a public Social Media option (wall-to-wall, group pages).
 - d. Ministry Personnel will limit their online communication with Youth via Social Media to daytime hours (8:00am-11:00pm).
 - e. Online communication will not involve video messaging (FaceTime, Skype, etc.) in any form, unless it is a training post or group conference call approved by the Youth Pastor.
 - f. Ministry Personnel will ensure that all online communication with Youth is done in view of other people (group pages, group texts, wall-to-wall) and/or copied to their parent/guardian. Communication should also be copied to your Ministry Leader or co-worker.
 - g. In the rare occasion that a conversation with a Youth moves beyond communication of information, Ministry Personnel will notify their Ministry Lead immediately and submit a copy of the conversation to the Ministry Lead. Ministry Personnel will request the Youth to continue the conversation in person with the Program Lead or his/her designate.
 - h. Youth Ministry Personnel will agree to allow the Youth Ministry Pastor, or designate by Senior Pastor, access to their Social Media networks in order to facilitate regular supervision.
 - i. Church members, adherents and Ministry Personnel are encouraged to demonstrate and model purity, integrity, transparency and accountability with all communications including those noted above.

2.10 Photography and Video Taping

1. With a desire to capture on film memorable moments at Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary, photography and videotaping will be closely monitored by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary Leadership. The AV Department and ministry departments must abide by the following guidelines:
 - a. Photography and videotaping will be done by designated ministry personnel who have been screened and trained in Child / Youth protection procedures;
 - b. For general, public church activities including services where videotaping will be done in the sanctuary and with the church family together it is required that signage be posted notifying those in attendance that the service / activity will be captured on film. Individuals can either stay out of the line of the camera or, if necessary, opt out of the activity / service.
 - c. For all Children and Youth ministry activities and programs, Parental permission must be secured prior to taking photographs of Children and Youth. Parental permission will be secured on an annual basis on the registration forms;
 - i. No photographs of Children or Youth will be taken without prior written approval;
 - ii. No photographs will be posted on Facebook, Instagram, or other online social networks without parental permission and only on sites monitored closely by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary leadership;
 - iii. Photographs of Children/Youth will only be posted on Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary's website with written parental permission and will not be named or tagged
 - d. To easily identify Children and Youth that are not to have their picture taken, it is recommended that they be clearly identified with either a sticker on their nametag or with an arm band. All effort should be made to adhere to the Parent's request.
 - e. No photographs will be tagged or labeled with the name of a Child / Youth at any time, including but not limited to bulletin boards, newsletters, websites, and/or church bulletins.
 - f. When archiving and filing photographs and video shots of Children and Youth, only those with written Parental permission can be kept for future use. Written permission forms must be kept permanently on file in the church office. Archived photos should be labeled and cross referenced with Parental permission form.

2.11 Embezzlement and Unauthorized Representation

1. Funds allocated for church ministries will be monitored and access will be restricted to authorized Ministry Personnel. Ministry Personnel suspected of, or found to be embezzling funds belonging to the church will be immediately removed from their position and may be subject to discipline action by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary and reported to the police.
2. Any Ministry Personnel suspected of or found to have acted as an unauthorized representative on behalf of the church will be immediately suspended from their position and may be subject to discipline action by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary and reported to the police.

3. SECTION III

POLICY ON REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS AND SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

3.01 Reporting Procedures

Hearing of an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

The following policies outline the procedure and sequence for reporting suspected abuse cases.

1. For the protection of our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse against Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults will be taken seriously.
2. Immediately upon hearing of potential abuse or allegations of abuse to a Child or Youth, the Ministry Personnel must complete a Suspected Abuse Report Form documenting all pertinent information (Appendix 11). The victim should not be asked leading questions nor should the accused or any other parties be contacted at the point of completing the Suspected Abuse Report Form.
3. All forms must be kept permanently unless otherwise directed by legal counsel.
4. Ministry Personnel are requested to notify the Senior Pastor and a delegated Associate Pastor that they will be making a report to Child and Family Services.

Reporting an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

1. According to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, any person with a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has a legal responsibility to immediately report the matter to child protection authorities or the police. Reporting must be done by telephone or in person promptly at the point of observing signs of abuse or receiving a report of abuse. The reporting must be immediate, a direct report, and an on-going report. The report may be done in conjunction with pastoral staff or your immediate Ministry Leader.
2. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offence and may be subject to discipline action by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary.
3. Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary requests that when a Ministry Volunteer or staff in the line of duty reports a suspicion of abuse or an allegation of abuse to authorities, that they also notify the Senior Pastor and a delegated Associate Pastor that a report has been made. It is understood that the report is to be kept confidential.
4. The Senior Pastor or his designate must notify Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary's insurance provider and seek legal counsel upon hearing of a suspected child abuse case.
5. If the suspected abuse happened in the context of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary ministries or was committed by a church member or attendee, the Parents of the victim must be notified by the Senior Pastor.

Assessing and Investigating an Allegation or Suspicion of Abuse

1. No persons, including Pastors and Board members, are to assume the function of assessing, substantiating or investigating the need for intervention or interpretation of suspected child abuse.
2. There must not be any undue interference when a report of child abuse has been filed with child protection authorities or the police. The Lead Pastor or his designate should ask the child protection authorities how they can assist in helping and supporting the investigation and the hurting Child or Youth and their family. The Lead Pastor or his designate should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counselling.

3.02 Response to Allegations

Spiritual Response and Counsel for the Victim

1. For the protection of our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, all allegations and/or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and handled with the utmost care. The suspected victims will be treated with dignity and respect.
2. During the process of reporting and response, all Ministry Personnel will be committed to prayer and strive to remain calm and hopeful.
3. Situations of abuse must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. Discretion must be observed and details of the suspected abuse must not be shared among the church community. Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis, expanding only as individuals are drawn into the response and investigation. Confidentiality for the victim must be protected.
4. Pastors will seek opportunities to provide individual care and counsel both for the abuse victim and their family. Pastors will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.

Biblical Response and Discipline for the Accused or Convicted

1. The accused is to be treated with dignity and respect. If the accused is a paid Ministry Personnel, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed with arrangements made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
2. It is the responsibility and right of Pastors and the Board to exercise and practice church discipline as outlined in Matthew 18 and as stipulated in denominational guidelines.
3. Pastors will seek opportunity to provide individual care and counsel both for the accused and their family. Pastors and the Board will determine the need for professional assistance and evaluate and designate resources as needed and able.
4. Anyone accused of abuse to Children or Youth will be prohibited from having access to Children or Youth until they are cleared of any and all charges. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual with restricted activities and areas of the church property that they are not permitted to use or be in.
5. Anyone convicted of child abuse will be prohibited from having access to Children or Youth. Pastors may designate an individual to be responsible to be informed whenever the convicted person attends church activities and to accompany the convicted person

while on church property. Clear written guidelines will be provided to the individual listing restricted areas and access points on the church property.

Media Relations

1. It is the responsibility of the Lead Pastor to be the designated spokesperson to speak on behalf of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary to media and to the public in relation to a suspected child abuse case. All inquiries should be directed to this person and comment should not be made by other individuals unless given permission to do so.
2. Public statements must be well prepared and presented under the guidance of legal counsel.

Ongoing Investigation

1. Full cooperation must be given by all parties to civil authorities under the guidelines of legal counsel.
2. At no time should Board members or Pastors either engage in denial, minimization or blame, or admit responsibility which could prejudice the case or cause increased liability to Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary.
3. A confidential follow-up report with conclusions and action taken must be documented by the Senior Pastor, or delegated Associate Pastor following a report of abuse. This report should be placed in a confidential Ministry Personnel file and kept permanently.
4. It is critical to maintain confidentiality and strictly adhere to a need-to-know basis only.

3.03 Response to Church Attendees Convicted of Child Abuse

Covenant Agreement

When an individual attends Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary that is a known to have abused Children or Youth in the past, and/or has been convicted of crimes against Children or Youth, the Board and Senior Pastor are to enter into a covenant agreement (Offenders Covenant - Appendix 15) with the individual if they wish to attend Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary on a regular basis. The covenant agreement is to be written and signed by a Pastor, and a representative of the Board, and the individual.

For the protection of Children, Youth and for the protection of those who are known to have a history of crimes against Children and Youth, the following parameters will be put into place restricting access to Children and Youth:

The Offenders Covenant should include the following:

- When he/she is on the premises there will be at least one (but preferably two) adult chaperons assigned to keep an eye on him/her at all times
- Children and Youth ministry areas will be off limits
- He/she will refrain from attending small groups where families with minors participate, and from forging close friendships with families from the church with minors.
- He/she will not be allowed on the Church property during special Children's events (such as VBS, mid-week Children's/Youth programs, etc.)
- He/she will not be allowed to take pictures while at Church
- When he/she leaves the sanctuary, for example, to use the washroom, one of the chaperons will check the washroom to make sure there are no Children in the

washroom. If there is a Child in the washroom the chaperon will ask the man/woman to wait until the Child is done before he/she goes in.

Privacy Concerns

Information regarding this person's convictions should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis. Unless he/she has a family (i.e., Children that would also be attending the Church) then parents do not need to know, therefore disclosure of this information should be kept to the Board and the Pastor.

SECTION IV

MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

4.01 Other Users and Shared Activities

1. In the case that outside users, members, adherents or renters are granted permission to use the facility for activities involving Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, that are not direct ministries and activities of the church, it is required that they provide a certificate of insurance, with no less than \$2,000,000 Commercial General Liability coverage and the church be named as additional insured. The user or renter is also required to demonstrate that they have a full Child/Youth protection policy and protocol in place. If they lack an Abuse Prevention Policy, Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary will refer them to Plan to Protect® to secure their own copy of the *Plan to Protect*® manual.
2. In the case, that Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary partners with other churches, agencies or community groups for the delivery of a joint activity or event with Children and/or Youth, the leadership of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary, requires that our Insurance Agent be consulted during the planning stage, to determine the risks, insurance coverage and shared liability. The program leader is required to obtain written opinion from the Insurance agent acknowledging the status of insurance coverage for these joint activities.

4.02 Policy Review

The Policy is to be reviewed and audited annually and updated every two years by the Board to ensure procedures are updated and/or clarified as needed and the Policy maintains its relevance to applicable provincial child protection legislation.

ACCEPTANCE

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we the Directors of the Corporation have hereunto set our hands at the City of Calgary, in the Province of Alberta this 31st day of August, 2019.

Lucilda Dawkins

Mavis Blake

Dawne Wharton

Clinton Davis

Lorenzo Anderson

David E. Brown

AFFIRMED by the Appointed Pastor of the Corporation this 31st day of August, 2019.

Vibert C. Dawkins

SECTION V – APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Ministry Personnel Application Form (Adults) for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Ministries

In our desire to reduce the risk of abuse within our church ministries, we believe this information is necessary to protect our Children, Youth and our Volunteers and to effectively place our Volunteers in ministry positions. Thank you in advance for your partnership.

Personal Information

Full Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____ Email _____

Phone Number (H) _____ (W) _____

Personal History

Occupation and/or Employer

Hobbies, Interests or Skills

Spiritual History

How long have you attended Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary? _____

Do you regularly attend (2 or more services a month)? Yes No

Are you a member of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary? Yes No

Have you been baptized? Yes No

If not, are you willing to attend a baptismal class? Yes No

In a brief paragraph, please outline your spiritual journey (how you came to know Christ as Saviour and what you are currently doing to grow in your relationship with Him).

List any gifts, training, education or other qualifications that have prepared you to minister with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Ministry Information

Churches I attended in the last five years are as follows:

1. Name of Church _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Dates Attended _____ Member or Adherent _____

2. Name of Church _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Dates Attended _____ Member or Adherent _____

My present and previous ministry experience is as follows:

1. Name of Church/Organization _____

Dates and Description of Ministry _____

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor _____ Phone # _____

2. Name of Church/Organization _____

Dates and Description of Ministry _____

Pastor or Ministry Supervisor _____ Phone # _____

Confidential Information

In order to provide a safe and secure environment for our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, we believe it is necessary to include the following questions as part of our application process. All information will be kept confidential by church leadership and the Plan to Protect® team. (Police may access this information, under warrant, if requested.) Answering yes to any of the questions may not necessarily preclude your involvement in ministry. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

1. Are there any circumstances involving your lifestyle or background that would call into question your ability to work with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults? (e.g. use of illegal substances, etc.) Yes No
2. Have you ever been convicted or found guilty of a criminal offense for which a pardon has not been granted (excluding minor traffic violations)? Yes No

If yes, please list offence(s) and the date(s) of conviction:

-
3. Have you ever been expelled from or had your employment terminated by any organization or employer for assault, violence or impropriety against a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Person (e.g. senior citizen or person with disabilities)? Yes No
 4. Have you ever been investigated by the Child Welfare Agency or any other organization for suspected child abuse? Yes No
 5. Have you ever been a defendant or respondent in a civil lawsuit or human rights complaint or other legal proceeding in which you were alleged to have abused or engaged in violence, harassment or other immoral or illegal behaviour or conduct involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults? Yes No

6. Do you have any health concerns which could impact your ability to perform the functions of the volunteer position for which you are applying? (Please note such health concerns may not prevent you from holding the position for which you have applied) Yes No
7. Do you have any contagious diseases or conditions of which we should be aware, and which we may need to take steps to protect against transmission should you volunteer at our organization? Yes No

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions, please explain.

References

Please provide the names of three individuals, excluding relatives, who could provide a reference for you. Include at least one reference from outside the church.

1. Name of Reference _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Nature of Relationship _____

2. Name of Reference _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Nature of Relationship _____

3. Name of Reference _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Nature of Relationship _____

Release of Information and Declaration of Intent

I hereby give Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary permission to contact the persons named as references to ascertain my suitability for volunteer ministry. I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you.

I give Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary consent to verify the information provided herein and to contact the references listed. I waive any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary for losses caused by the reference's response.

I also grant my permission for Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary to perform a police records check, for purposes of my protection against any false allegations and for the protection of those I serve. I consent to such an investigation with the understanding that the results will be kept in strict confidence. I agree to adhere to the protection policies as adopted by this organization.

I understand that if my character or morals are deemed by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary leadership to be inappropriate and/or criminal at any time during my volunteer service, Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary will be entitled to terminate my assistance without express cause or prior notice regardless of any other oral or written statement by Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary prior to, at, or following the date of volunteer service.

I understand that Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary is responsible for the welfare of any person or persons entrusted to my care. I will cooperate fully with the staff in the fulfillment of my duties and will keep all information I encounter, in my role as a volunteer, confidential. If at any time I find that for any reason I am unable to support the policies, procedures or doctrine of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary, I will gracefully and quietly resign my volunteer position. If my supervisors find that I am in conflict with any of the policies, procedures or doctrines and we are not able to resolve the issue, I will gracefully and quietly agree to resign my volunteer position.

I hereby acknowledge that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application for volunteer ministry is true and correct. I accept and agree to adhere to the Statement of Faith of Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary.

Signature of Applicant _____

Printed Name _____ Date _____

Signature of Witness _____

Printed Name _____ Date _____

Information received is confidential and is being gathered for the purposes of screening Program Personnel and placing them into ministry with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. The information gathered here will be used for the purposes of supporting the ministries at Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary.



Renewed Life Fellowship Calgary

Beliefs and Doctrines

The Renewed Life Fellowship is firm in its commitment to orthodox Christian belief.

We affirm that there is one God eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, the physical miracles He performed, His atoning death upon the Cross, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His personal return in power and glory at His second coming.

We profess that regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for the salvation of sinful mankind.

We believe the sinner is brought to an awareness of the need for salvation through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that in sanctification by the blood of Christ, one is made holy.

We affirm the present, active ministry of the Holy Spirit who guides the Church and by whose indwelling and empowerment we are able to live godly lives and render effective service to God and others.

We believe in the oneness and ultimate unity of believers for which our Lord prayed, and that this should be visibly displayed “that the world may know, see, and believe” God’s glory, the coming of His Son, and the great love He has for His people (John 17:20–23).

We are committed to the sanctity of the marriage bond and the importance of strong, loving Christian families.

The Church embraces all biblical doctrines as taught in the New Testament and have listed some that may be helpful to believers seeking to mature in Christ Jesus:

REPENTANCE

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the world and upon the human heart through the gospel of Jesus Christ (John 16:8–11) brings CONVICTION, an awareness and acknowledgement of sin against God and the need to confess that guilt with Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10). In short, repentance means not only being sorry for sin, but a turning from and forsaking the old life (sin habits) for a new walk by faith in God through the Holy Spirit and in company with the people of God (Acts 2:42). The result of repentance is salvation, a work that is both instantaneous (new birth—John 3:3–8) and life-inclusive, beginning with the giving of new life by the Holy Spirit to the believer and climaxing with a glorified body (Hebrews 9:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19). Repentance results in Justification, Regeneration, or what is called the “Born Again” experience as explained below.

JUSTIFICATION

Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1, 2). Justification is both a state and an act: On the part of the repentant one, it is the state of being without offense toward God. On God’s part, it is His act in forgiving the actual sins for which one has repented and declaring the individual accepted in a new relationship. The individual is said to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ; that is, one’s sins are covered (atoned for), and God no longer holds that person accountable for those sins. New spiritual life has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17), a beginning sometimes referred to as “Regeneration.”

REGENERATION/BORN AGAIN

Regeneration describes the work of God in providing new spiritual life in the believer. Human beings without Christ are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) and must be made alive or regenerated through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). This giving of new spiritual life through Jesus Christ enables right relationships with God, the ability to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), and is simultaneous with Justification (previous page). It is God’s gracious act to rekindle the spiritual life lost in Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22) so one may now walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Romans 8:1–11). Accordingly, the individual is said to be “Born Again” or born of God (1 John 5:1). In responding to the double question of Nicodemus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:4, 5). To be born again, then, is to become a new creation in Christ, a child of God, justified and regenerated as a result of true repentance and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. There is no other way to enter the kingdom. This entrance into a new life of discipleship to Christ (Acts 2:42) engages the believer in actively seeking more of God, fellowshiping and worshipping with God’s people, and intentionally obeying God’s Word as the believer learns how to “possess his vessel (whole body) in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4).

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification, like salvation, ultimately spans the entire life of the believer. Initially, it is a work of grace subsequent to being justified, regenerated, or born again. It is an instantaneous work, which both sets one apart for God (1 Corinthians 1:2) and crucifies and cleanses the old nature, enabling the believer to be free from the dominant rule of sin: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For, he that is dead is freed from sin” (Romans 6:6, 7). “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). This dethroning of the old nature, this cleansing, this setting apart, places upon the believer the scriptural demand to “mortify the deeds of the body” through the Spirit (Romans 8:12, 13) and to “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication [sexual immorality], uncleanness, inordinate [abnormal] affection, evil concupiscence [desire for earthly things], and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). Second Peter 3:17, 18 further encourages growth in God’s grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” There is then in sanctification, a responsibility on the part of the believer to “put off” some habits and practices, and to “put on” others, which means there must be intentionality to holiness (Ephesians 4:22–32). Sanctification empowers us against sin’s control; the believer responds with a renewed mind to be transformed into the image of Christ (Romans 12:1, 2) and to be holy in life and conduct (2 Corinthians 7:1).

HOLINESS

Holiness is a command of our Lord: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:14–16), the state of being free from sin (sin’s dominance) made possible by God’s sanctifying and cleansing work (Romans 6:11–14; 1 Corinthians 6:11), and further sustained by active, whole-hearted pursuit of a life of Christ-likeness on the part of the maturing believer. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11, 12). “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7). “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). Holiness must also be the Church’s collective goal as the body of Christ to demonstrate the praises (virtues) of Him “who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38, 39). The baptism with the Holy Spirit as it occurred at Pentecost and in subsequent places in the Book of Acts (8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:2–7) is a definite experience that is subsequent to the salvation and sanctification experiences or may accompany them in a somewhat simultaneous way. Jesus said to His disciples, “... for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). This indwelling is a definite, instantaneous experience described in the Scriptures by the word “baptism” and is accompanied by the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. The baptism is also the Holy Spirit’s endowment of the believer for service in the kingdom, as the Church was empowered at Pentecost to go forth with the message of the gospel: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy [Spirit] is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This experience should not be confused with water baptism, regeneration, or sanctification.

The Holy Spirit “is come” [has been sent by Christ—Acts 2:33] to “reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,” to serve as the church’s guide and director, and to reveal the things of Christ (John 16:7–15). As such, it is important for believers to seek both the baptism (Acts 2:38, 39) and His fullness (Ephesians 5:18) in order that they may become familiar with His leadership and guidance and cooperatively participate in His work, both for personal Christian maturity and for service in Christ’s mission to the world.

SPEAKING IN OTHER TONGUES

Speaking in (with) other tongues—languages (magnifying God through uttering His wonderful works in languages normally unknown to the speaker—Acts 2:4–8; 11; 10:44–46) is common in the Book of Acts to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit upon believers as clearly stated in the foregoing scriptural texts. Acts 19:6 also shows the same result (speaking in tongues and prophesying) when the apostle Paul laid hands on twelve believers in the city of Ephesus for them to receive the Holy Spirit. In regulating the order and use of spiritual gifts to the Corinthian saints (1 Corinthians 12–14), Paul also allows for the private use of tongues in prayer to God and indicates that this edifies the individual believer’s spirit (14:2–4). The gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues for public use in the assembled congregation are, of course, to be distinguished from the baptism with the Spirit as applied in the individual’s experience. Paul makes this clear by referring to his own experience (cf. Acts 9:17–19) when he says, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all” (1 Corinthians 14:18). While closing his admonition by prioritizing the gift most useful for the public edification of all (prophecy), he was careful to add, “and forbid not to speak with tongues” (v. 39).

Following the biblical pattern in Acts, the Renewed Life Fellowship and other classical Holiness/Pentecostal churches teach that speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance is the initial evidence (observable by others) of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. However, it is not to be regarded or sought as an “end-all” experience. Daily walking and living in the Spirit (Romans 8:1–14) will continue to build Christian character (the fruit of the Spirit) and should be the desire and practice of every believer.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

As mentioned above, daily walking and living in the Spirit will cause the fruit of the Spirit to be regularly manifested in the life of the believer: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22, 23). Such fruit cannot be produced by the flesh or by human nature. Indeed, the opposing nature and starkly contrary deeds of the flesh are partly enumerated in the same text with the concluding remark, “. . . they which do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 21). “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (v. 16). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the

fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)” (Ephesians 5:8, 9). The Spirit’s work is crucial to the life of the believer and to the church.

FULL RESTORATION OF THE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

In accordance with the Spirit’s work, various spiritual gifts are given to and in the church and are manifested through individuals sometimes in an apparently resident manner (repeatedly) and, at other times, spontaneously, as by direct unction of the Spirit in a given setting (1 Corinthians 12:4–11; Romans 12:4–8; Ephesians 4:7–16). Although there are historical periods during which spiritual gifts were not as prevalent as other times, there is no scriptural warrant to support the idea that these gifts ceased. Based on the foregoing scriptural texts and others, the Renewed Life Fellowship teaches that spiritual gifts exist in the body of Christ and are owned, distributed, controlled, and operated by the Spirit as it pleases Him. The Church does not advocate personal claims to the gifts, but encourages individuals to humbly know and fulfill their callings to Christian service in response to the Spirit’s leading and with the abilities He gives. As the church is restored to New Testament power, the gifts of the Spirit are expected to serve to edify the body of Christ in these last days just as those same gifts did in earlier times.

SIGNS FOLLOWING BELIEVERS

Because of spiritual gifts and the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, miraculous signs and wonders may accompany the works and ministries of true believers. Mark 16:17–20 records, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. . . . And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” While Jesus identified for His apostles what may follow in the lives of those who believe, the import of this text, when balanced against other salvation scriptures such as Romans 10:8–13, does not allow for these to occur (whether simultaneously or one by one) in every instance of salvation. However, the Church sees no Scriptural warrant for the ceasing of these signs, but believe they have occurred and are still occurring today. “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy [Spirit], according to his own will” (Hebrews 2:2–4)?

DIVINE HEALING

God’s sovereign grace and mercy, through the atonement of Jesus Christ for all our sins and ultimately for all the consequences of sin, provides for the healing/salvation of our souls as well as our bodies in His work on Calvary. In the tradition of Jesus and His apostles as recorded in the Gospels and Acts (Mark 3:1–5; 9–12; 14, 15; Matthew 10:8; Acts 5:12), the Church believes that divine healing is accomplished by the power of God without the aid of medicine or surgical skills (Matthew 8:14–17). While it is clear that God does not always heal instantaneously in response to all prayers for healing (whether of the individual or of someone else praying on behalf of an individual—see 2 Timothy 4:20), it is also a clear biblical duty of the elders and ministers of the Church to pray for the sick and to visit the sick (James 5:13–18 with Matthew 25:34–40). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:2, 3). This text specifically addresses the soul, but the whole person (spirit/soul and body) can be divinely healed by the power of God. The healing of persons in response to faith and prayer (Acts 3:11–16) and by God’s special mercy (to spare certain of His servants more sorrow, cf. Philippians 2:25–27) is definitely confirmed in Scripture. We have a duty to continue to pray fervently for the sick, humbly leaving it in God’s hands to work His sovereign will.

WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is the act of being immersed in water according to the commandment and instructions of Christ (Matthew 28:19). This ordinance has no power to wash away sins, but is the

answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21) and represents for the believer an identity with the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Romans 6:3–5). Mark 16:16 further reinforces the necessity of this step of obedience: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned.” On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter told those under conviction what they should do: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Obviously, the apostles literally followed the Lord’s instructions, and we can do no less. Baptism, then, is outward evidence of our submission to Christ in salvation and our public declaration that we are His followers. It identifies us with His people in His kingdom. “Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (2:41; see also 10:47, 48 and 16:30–33).

THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper is a sacred ordinance that our Lord Himself instituted on the night He was betrayed as He ate the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:14–22). He instructed that this be done in remembrance of Him. It is representative of our communion and fellowship with Him. The apostle Paul reiterated the Lord’s instructions to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11:23–25), adding some helpful details: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, [in an unworthy manner], shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, so that we are not condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another” (verses 26–33). It is therefore the Church’s position that this be observed with all gravity and in an orderly manner. No one should approach the Lord’s Table with unforgiven sin in one’s heart, and all should consecrate themselves in prayer before and upon every occasion of this observance. The Lord’s Supper consists of “the fruit of the vine” (unfermented grape juice, as is our practice), representing the blood of Christ, and unleavened bread, representing His broken body on the cross. The Church encourages the Lord’s Supper to be observed at least once a quarter, but to do so more often is certainly compatible with scriptural teaching: “They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46, 47 NLT).

WASHING THE SAINTS’ FEET

Feet Washing was instituted by Jesus on the night of the Last Supper and is considered by the Church a New Testament ordinance that we are enjoined to observe. As the Lord’s Supper represents our communion with Christ, Feet Washing represents our common unity (community) with each other as followers of Christ and partakers together with Him. Jesus sent two of His disciples to the home of a special friend in Jerusalem to prepare for the Passover meal (Mark 14:12–17). These preparations would have included a basin, water pitcher, and a towel for the customary washing of feet. According to verse seventeen above, the twelve came with Jesus, but there is no mention of the washing of feet. Luke tells us there was anguish among the disciples as Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him and also that there was a quarrel between them as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22:21–24). Jesus taught them servanthood as their right relationship (verses 25–27) and demonstrated His posture as a Servant among them by washing their feet (John 13:3–5). In establishing this spirit of servanthood among them, Jesus said, “. . . Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (verses 12–15; 17). The Church encourages that Feet Washing be observed in the same service as the Lord’s Supper whenever possible and in a decent and orderly manner.

TITHING AND GIVING

Tithing means to bring one-tenth of our increase into the treasury of the Church (Proverbs 3:9, 10). The first biblical record of tithing to God's work began with Abraham who paid tithes to Melchisedec (priest of the Most High God) of the spoils from his battle with the kings (Genesis 14:18-20), continued under the law, and received the approval of our Lord (Matthew 10:5-10; 23:23). Other New Testament writers reference God's provisions that they who preach the gospel should live (be supported) of the gospel hearers (1 Corinthians 9:6-14; Luke 10:7). See also Hebrews 7:4-10, which gives tithing a certain generational transcendence. The Church considers that the Scriptural obligation to tithe is not fulfilled by just giving directly to the poor or to individuals or good causes. While the Church espouses and participates in all such support, her understanding of the biblical practice of tithing is that tithes are paid—brought into the treasury of the Church for the Lord's work, especially for the benefit of those who minister in the Word (Hebrews 7:8). God's blessings and favor will follow in all the productive areas of life (Malachi 3:7-12). Giving of offerings differs from tithing and is done in addition to tithing. Both are part of God's plan to finance His work on earth (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; Philippians 4:10-19). A spirit of generosity has always permeated the Church from very early times (Acts 4:32-35), and the apostle Paul quoted our Lord to the Ephesian elders in his farewell address advising them "... to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (20:35). Once received into the Church's treasury, tithes and offerings are regulated through appropriate Church decisions and are administered by authorized Church policies and personnel.

RESTITUTION WHERE POSSIBLE

Restitution is the act of restoring something wrongfully taken or the satisfying of one who has been wronged. Making things right as far as is humanly possible is a natural result of salvation by God's grace as seen in the way Zacchaeus responded to our Lord's saving visit to his house: "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' And Jesus said unto him, 'This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham'" (Luke 19:8, 9). Where it is impossible to make contact with the person or institution involved, the believer should still exhibit a desire to return what was taken, to restore a relationship, or to seek forgiveness. When necessary, those who make restitution should bear patiently any consequences that may result such as legal sanctions, financial costs, or even rejection by the persons approached. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

PRE-MILLENNIAL SECOND COMING OF JESUS

Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to earth again (Acts 1:11), and the Church understands this coming in two phases: First, in mid-air to resurrect the dead saints and to catch away the living saints to meet Him so that all who are in Christ can attend the marriage supper of the Lamb: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; see also 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). "And he saith unto me, 'Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he saith unto me, 'These are the true sayings of God'" (Revelation 19:9). Second, Jesus will return with the saints to reign on earth for a thousand years: "... And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection" (20:4, 5; see also Zechariah 14:4-9; Revelation 5:10; 20:6).

RESURRECTION

God's plan for the world includes a time of accountability of all people (living and dead) before His judgment seat. For this reason, all the dead, both righteous and wicked, will be resurrected. As part of the assurance of this judgment, God raised Jesus from the dead and appointed Him judge (Acts 24:15; Daniel 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:30, 31). However, the resurrection of the wicked dead and their time of judgment will not occur until after the thousand-year reign of Christ

on earth with His saints (Revelation 20:4–6). Paul expressed the Christian’s hope in the resurrection this way: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10). We look for the Savior from heaven. Paul says, “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (v. 21).

ETERNAL LIFE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

In Jesus’ high priestly prayer, He defined eternal life as follows: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). The New Testament everywhere teaches that eternal life is promised to those who believe in Jesus: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Those who die in the Lord and those who are serving Him when He returns will receive the reward of eternal life: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:22, 23).

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

How we live our lives in this present world determines our destiny in the next, our eternal reward (Daniel 12:2; Romans 2:4–9). The unconverted and the wicked are doomed to eternal punishment from which there is no escape—no liberation, no annihilation: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46). “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

ABSTINENCE FROM ALL LIQUOR OR STRONG DRINKS

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1). “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment” (Isaiah 28:7). “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:20, 21). Because of these and other biblical texts, the Renewed Life Fellowship teaches abstinence from the use of intoxicating beverages. Scriptural teaching is, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). We are also advised “That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour” (1 Thessalonians 4:4). (See also 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; 10:31; Galatians 5:21).

CONCERNING TOBACCO, OPIUM, MORPHINE, ETC.

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). The use of tobacco in any form is forbidden as well as the habitual use of narcotics or other habit-forming drugs. Addictions and enslavements to drugs or other substances are incompatible with the surrender of our bodies to the Lord as holy vessels of honor for His use (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Thessalonians 4:4). “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31).

CONCERNING FOOD AND DRINKS

The New Testament makes no rigid rule concerning what foods a Christian shall eat or drink with the exception of strong drink and addictive and enslaving substances. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16, 17). Thus we have no right to judge what our brother or sister eats or drinks. The legal restrictions of the Mosaic Law concerning these were not extended into the Grace Dispensation: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy [Spirit]" (Romans 14:17). See also 1 Corinthians 8:8 and 1 Timothy 4:1–5.

ON THE SABBATH

The Book of Genesis tells us that on the seventh day God ended His work and blessed that day and sanctified it (Genesis 2:2, 3). This was no doubt His preparatory plan to set Israel apart as a special people, for to them, He gave the Law, which included the observance of the Sabbath. Jesus' corrective to the Pharisees' strict observance of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28) placed people above enslavement to the day and asserted His Lordship over the day. As such, the Renewed Life Fellowship teaches that observance of that day per se was not carried over into the Grace Dispensation. Sunday is not the Sabbath but merely a day set aside to give special attention to the worship of God. In the Early Church, they referred to Sunday as "the first day of the week" and later as "the Lord's Day" or "Resurrection Day." Therefore, worship on Sunday is also very appropriate. Christians are required to keep every day holy rather than just one particular day. The Jewish Sabbath was also a type of Jesus Christ who is presented in Scripture as our rest (Hebrews 4:1–11). "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16, 17). See also Romans 14:5, 6.

ADORNMENT

Scripture does not prohibit the use of a cultural wedding symbol due to marital, social, and cultural conditions; nor does it establish its necessity. In certain instances, the marriage symbol or emblem may strengthen the marriage arrangement and order, and thus its use is not for ornamentation. Therefore, the cultural wedding symbol or emblem, though not necessitated, may be worn due to marital, social, and cultural situations in order to preserve the headship principle and the integrity of marriage (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:8; Ephesians 5:22, 23). Scripture neither prohibits (absolutely) nor necessitates the use of ornamental adornment. It does give strong precautionary principles for its use such as modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety and calls attention to the ornament of the inner man, that of "a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Timothy 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:3, 4). Ornamentation must not be used in any way that lends itself to idolatrous, occult, or lustful practices (Isaiah 3:18–22; Acts 8:9; 19:19; 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9; Galatians 5:19–21; Revelation 2:20–23). It is also important to remember that adornment includes more than jewelry alone. To apply the prudent principles of Scripture (both for those who wear and those who do not), an overriding principle is found in Romans 14:13: "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's [sister's] way."

MEMBERSHIP IN LODGES/SECRET SOCIETIES

The Bible is opposed to the people of God being unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–18); it is opposed to deeds done in secret, and it demands the complete and undivided loyalty of God's children: "Jesus answered him, 'I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing'" (John 18:20; see also Luke 16:13). Many secret societies/organizations require the taking of an oath of secrecy and oath-taking is expressly forbidden (see the following paragraph)—as we shall see shortly (Ephesians 5:12, 13).

WHOLESOME SPEECH OF THE BELIEVER

The taking of an oath is a vain thing and condemned in the Scriptures. An affirmation to the truth of anything is sufficient and usually accepted even in courts of law: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither

by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:34–37; see also James 5:12). The term “swearing” is also used of profanity, which the Bible teaches against: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29; see also 5:4).

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:18–25; Deuteronomy 6:7; Matthew 5:32; 14:3, 4; 19:3–12; Mark 10:12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5; 6:9–18; 7:2, 11; Colossians 3:18–21.

Marriage and Family

The Renewed Life Fellowship affirms the biblical teaching that marriage is sacred and should not be entered into lightly without proper preparation. Marriage was originally instituted by God as a properly recognized covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. The Church affirms the biblical family as a father and mother in wedlock who may procreate children. The Church further asserts that the home, including the extended family, is to be guided by love, discipline, and other nurturing aspects as taught in God’s Word. Because the Church is committed to the sanctity of marriage and human life, we diligently stand against abortion, incest, abuse, euthanasia, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, and lesbianism, which we believe are contrary to God’s original design as expressed in His Word. All biblically unlawful unions such as same sex, incestuous, or polygamous marriages are renounced by the Church even if they are recognized as legal by civil governments.

Divorce and Remarriage

Concerning “divorce” in the above context, the Church means the breaking of a legitimate, lawful, biblical marriage and holds firmly to the principle that such divorces are not God’s will, especially between Christians. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing should be sought as a first priority in order to preserve marriages and prevent divorce. The Church also recognizes that despite biblical teaching and honest human effort, divorces do occur sometimes against the will of one or the other party. Therefore, the Church recognizes (in a pastoral sense) those causes, in addition to death, that would be recognized as ending a previously valid biblical marriage. In such cases, delineated on the following page, marriage partners would not be classed as adulterers even though remarried:

- If persons were divorced and remarried for any reason prior to their personal salvation and have demonstrated a willingness to seek restitution (forgiveness from the offended spouse) and restoration where possible.
- If a divorce occurred because of a spouse’s habitual adulterous behavior and efforts to bring reconciliation are no longer possible.
- If divorce occurred because of spousal or child abuse, such as incestuous behavior that seriously endangers the life and health of the spouse or family and violates the sanctity of holy matrimony.

Under no circumstances should Christians or church members initiate or seek divorce without completely exhausting all biblical and counseling avenues to restore, rebuild, and sustain their marriages. Marriages that clearly violate biblical standards (such as incestuous marriages) may be appealed to the presbytery for specific consideration. All divorce and remarriage cases not falling within the categories described above should be referred for counsel and resolution to the Pastor and local church leadership, the State/Regional/National Presbytery, or the General Ministerial Presbytery (which includes the General Overseer and General Presbyters) as may be appropriate.

