



## Ignacio Community Church Relational Commitments

### Introduction

The following Commitments are designed to help the people who attend our church relate in a way that honors God and promotes authentic relationships. These Commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, marriage and divorce, protecting children from abuse, counseling, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

These Commitments are intended to help us build a strong community of faith. By community, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of His love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ. At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. That is where these Commitments come in. They pull together key principles from God's Word and serve as our relational guidelines.

We believe that adopting these Commitments will strengthen our church's resolve to respond to conflict biblically and relate to one another in a way that demonstrates the reconciling power of Christ in our lives. **These Commitments will apply both to members and to non-members who continue to attend our church regularly.** Most of these issues are not adequately addressed in our existing Bylaws and policies, which leaves our church unnecessarily exposed to misunderstandings, conflict, and legal liability.

Therefore, we would like to invite you to live under these Commitments and practice them as a church body. Living under these Commitments benefits our church and those to whom we are reaching out.

## Commitment to *Protect Our Children*

*The prudent see danger and take refuge (Prov. 27:12a).*

Children are blessings from God, and He calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ. Since sin affects every person and organization in the world, however, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm.

We have a Child Protection Policy to carry out this commitment. It provides procedures for approving workers to serve in our ministries to children. Application Packets are available from Children's Ministry.

## Commitment to Biblical Counseling

*I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).*

All Christians struggle with living the Christian life and developing godly relationships. God calls all Christians to seek assistance from other believers, and especially from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14, Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17-18; James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its people to seek counsel from and confess sins to each other, and especially to our leaders. We seek to train lay counselors and provide access to vocational biblical counselors.

## Purposes of Commitments

**They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, preserve marriages and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.**

**They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion, and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.**

**They provide clear tracks on which to run when conflict threatens to divide us, and remind us how to move quickly and purposefully toward reconciliation.**

**They establish guidelines for how our leaders will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children from abuse.**

**They define and limit the spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby seek to ensure that all members are treated fairly.**

**Finally they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.**

Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

See [www.peacemakerchurch.net](http://www.peacemakerchurch.net) for information on how these commitments can help to prevent conflict and reduce exposure to legal liability in our church.

Adopted July 9, 2016



## COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9)*

Our church is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness, and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to Himself through the sacrifice of His only Son (John 13:34-45; Eph. 4:29-32; Col 3:12-15).

Therefore we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God (1 Cor. 10:31), promote justice (1 Cor. 6:1-3), reconcile relationships (Col 3:12-15), and preserve our witness for Christ (John 13:35). As God gives us His wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the principles of peacemaking and reconciliation.

### Personal Peacemaking

We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5). We will seek to overlook minor offenses (Prov. 19:11). We will make “charitable judgments” by believing the best until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7). If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will go promptly to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15). We will offer correction gently, with the goal of restoring (Prov. 12:18; Eph 4:29; Gal. 6:1). When others repent, we will forgive them as He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov 15:32-33). When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others’ interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).

### Assisted Peacemaking

When we cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek wise people in our church and listen humbly (Matt. 18:16; Phil 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.

When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint (Reconciliation Team), and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).

When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). We will seek to cooperate with other churches to resolve matters involving their members.

If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally, we will not seek to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation, a division of Peacemaker Ministries ([www.peacemaker.net](http://www.peacemaker.net)).

If a person has an unresolved conflict with someone in a former church, we will require and assist her/him to be reconciled before joining our church (Matt 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).

When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the Elders as set forth in our bylaws. Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know His infinite love and peace.

## COMMITMENT TO PRESERVING MARRIAGES

*So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate (Matt. 19:6).*

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ’s loving relationship with His bride, the Church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). Therefore, He established marriage to be a life-long, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). God also designed it to provide mutual companionship through life’s joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general.

### Commitment to Confidentiality

*A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13).*

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (James 5:16), thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and work of the local church, all members and attenders are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling.

