

## Dickson Baptist Church Leadership Stance Regarding Sex, Sexuality, Worship and Ministry

We at Dickson Baptist Church (DBC) want to be a Christian community that is faithful to Jesus Christ, and welcoming and respectful of people who do not share our beliefs and practices. There is a difference between the Christian view of sexual ethics, and the view of the wider Australian community. This document aims to give clarity to how we relate to people who do not share our belief in the Christian, biblical sexual ethic.

The foundation of our faith is that God so loved the world that he sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem us from our sin. Central to Christian ethics is Jesus' command to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:29-30). We recognise that love involves obedience to God and encouraging one another to obey Him as well (John 14:23-24; Hebrews 10:23-27).

The Christian, biblical sexual ethic can be summarised as follows: "...sexual intimacy is a gift of God for the relationship of a husband and wife, and such intimacy is to be exercised with love, grace and fidelity. Those not in a husband-wife relationship are called to celibacy."<sup>1</sup> This is based on God's design for relationships in creation, Jesus' affirmation of that design, the teaching that marriage is a reflection of Christ and the church, and the commands in scripture regarding sexual ethics (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-6; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 7:2-5; Galatians 5:13-26; Ephesians 5:21-33). This is the sexual ethic that we teach and seek to uphold at DBC.

We expect that there are people who participate with us in corporate worship, and who are exploring the Christian faith, who do not uphold or accept this ethic. Our desire is to welcome, love and respect all people, and to be faithful in following the ethical commands that we are given by God.

In view of this:

1. All people are invited and are welcome to come and attend DBC, whether or not they confess our beliefs, provided they do so peaceably. We do not expect people to share our beliefs or ethical standards before they attend DBC, recognising that some people come to faith by first experiencing the hospitality and observing the worship of the community of God, and then growing to believe in the Christian faith. (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:42-47)
2. We encourage all people at DBC to hold to the sexual ethic outlined above, believing that it is the design of God for our flourishing. We will encourage all who are married to practice fidelity, and to treat their partner with tenderness, kindness, and intimacy in life in general and in their sexual relationship. We will encourage those who are not married to practice celibacy, and to build wholesome, tender, kind, and intimate friendships. (1 Corinthians 7; 1 Timothy 5:1-2; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 4:7-10)
3. We will remember the many challenges to godly sexual relationships that exist in our culture, including promiscuity, adultery, and pornography. We will actively promote a culture in which godliness is upheld and we are supportive of one another as we strive to resist temptation and cultivate godliness. (Matthew 5:27-30; Rom 13:8-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 7:2, 8-9; Hebrews 13:1-8)
4. The call of the gospel to everyone comes with the expectation of self-denial and obedience. For everyone this involves repentance and turning away from ungodly behaviour including idolatry, greed, slander, drunkenness, theft and sexual immorality.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition is taken from the Baptist Association Public Issue Paper: 'Pastoral and Missional Responses to Same-Sex Oriented Persons'

We affirm that everyone is called to repentance, no matter what sins they are tempted by. (Matthew 7:1-5; Mark 1:14-15; 8:34-38; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Colossians 3:1-14)

5. We will exercise grace, love and understanding when people give into temptation. When people have fallen short of the Christian biblical sexual ethic we will, as with other sin, lovingly call them to repentance, listen to their feelings, and recognise that repentance can take time. (Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; James 5:16, 19-20)
6. We desire to give people space to explore the Christian faith, and believe that responding in faith requires repentance from sin and obedience to God and his word, empowered by the Holy Spirit. While we make room for differences among believers, we recognise that sexual ethics impacts upon a person's salvation (Ephesians 5:3-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). If people have searched the scriptures, come to different conclusions about sexual ethics, and engage in conduct that is inconsistent with the sexual ethic above, we will respectfully ask them to leave the fellowship of DBC. We will do this in order to preserve the unity and faithfulness of the church community. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Jude 3-4; Revelation 2:12-16, 18-23)
7. While homosexual activity and any form of lust is prohibited by God and is sin (Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Colossians 3:5-6; 1 Timothy 1:8-11), we recognise that people with a same-sex orientation can live sexually pure lives. We recognise that while all believers are called to sexual purity, this does not require that a person's sexual orientation change. We will not lead same-sex oriented people to believe that their orientation is shameful. (Romans 5:1-5, 8:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 4:14-16)
8. We recognise that faithfulness to a biblical sexual ethic is costly and difficult, especially for those who are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. We will do our best to be a community where all people can be supported in loneliness and temptation, and where all people can experience the intimacy and fellowship of Christian community. (Luke 18:29-30, Romans 12:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 6:2)
9. While we welcome all to attend DBC, we do expect those who serve and lead to uphold the sexual ethic above as one of our shared beliefs. This means that those who do not agree with the Christian biblical sexual ethic above are not able to serve, lead, or become members of DBC. We recognise that this may involve lovingly asking someone to step out of a position that they have held previously, or lovingly telling someone they may not serve in ministry at DBC (Romans 16:17-19; Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:3-7)
10. As Christians we are commanded by Jesus to love all people, regardless of their sins and imperfections. As a church we seek to treat all people with love and respect (Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; Colossians 4:5-6). Attitudes and behaviours that are insensitive or bigoted will not be tolerated in our Church community.

While it is difficult to create a policy that adequately addresses such a pastorally sensitive topic, we seek to be guided by the gospel. In the gospel God offers all people forgiveness when they repent and follow Jesus in obedience. In the gospel, God brings people into fellowship in the people of God. In the gospel all people are promised the Holy Spirit to empower them to live lives of obedience to God.

This gospel is the foundation of our church. It is good news, and we offer it freely to all people.

*This document draws on guidance from the Baptist Association Public Issues Paper: 'Pastoral and Missional Response to Same-Sex Oriented Persons', available from <http://nswactbaptists.org.au/response-same-sex-oriented-persons/>*