

PREAMBLE:

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are compelled to bear witness to the love, grace, and truth of *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word...Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. (John 14:23-24)*

God in every generation. We believe in and serve a God who is living and active, and continually drawing us nearer to the image of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom that he proclaimed. As Christ *"Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22 & 23-24)*

himself assured us, following the Holy Spirit often leads us into periods of time where we are called to reflect on and reform our traditions and practices to be more clearly conformed to the mind and example of Jesus Christ. This has been the case throughout Christian history. So it is *It's more prevalent in Christian history, including what is recorded in Scripture, that the ungodly and immoral persecute those who hold fast the Word of God.*

that we, like each generation before us, are called to reflect, repent, and reform our teachings and practices to be ever more closely aligned with the heart and will of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

"It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household." (Matthew 10:25)

In every generation there are those who resist the Spirit's leading in various ways and cling to the dogmas and traditions that God is calling us to rethink and reform. Throughout our history, *Who is really calling for that reform? If it is God, He will tell us in His Word because He has bound Himself to it. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4)*

those who have been on the leading edge of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work have often found themselves initially excluded, marginalized, and demonized by some of those within established *Way to pat yourselves on the back! Leading edge like Joseph Smith and Muhammad? How about Jim Jones and David Koresh? What objective truth tells you they weren't on the "leading edge" of the Holy Spirit?*

Christian institutions. In the twenty-first century, we believe that the Church finds itself once again on the brink of a new reformation, one in which the Holy Spirit is calling us to return to the Scriptures and our traditions in order to re-examine our teachings on human sexuality and *If they are "our teachings" then they ought to be up for review. "Scripture cannot be broken." (John 10:35)*

gender identity.

For decades, many pastors, theologians, and reformers have boldly responded to the Holy Spirit's call and have stepped forward to call the Church to a renewed understanding of *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."* (1 John 4:1)

Christian teaching on sexuality and gender identity that includes, affirms, and embraces the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary, queer community as created and fully blessed by God and welcomed in to the life of the Church and society just as they are, without a *Created, yes. "Your hands fashioned and made me." (Job 10:8) Loved? Yes! "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Blessed? "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?... And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

need to conform to the heteronormative, patriarchal, binary sexuality and gender paradigm that Christianity has come to promote and embrace. As these prophetic voices have stepped *[Jesus said,] "From the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'" (Mark 10:6)*

forward, some within traditional Christian institutions have gone great lengths to demonize, exclude, and marginalize those who have faithfully followed the Holy Spirit's leading to reexamine Scripture and the tradition, claiming that these reformers were false teachers or heretics, and represented only a small percentage of Christians worldwide.

Over the past twenty years in particular, hundreds of thousands of followers of Christ around *An argument from numbers is no evidence of truth. Elijah was one true prophet against 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).*

the globe have begun to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and have come to understand the teachings of Scripture and our tradition to fully affirm, embrace, and celebrate *[Jesus said,] "Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:19)

the LGBT+ community and its relationships. Whilst some within the traditional Christian establishment have sought to minimize the growing wave of prominent Christian voices that have reformed their perspectives on LGBT+ inclusion, the undeniable truth remains that the so- *It's quite deniable if you want the entire Bible to be true from beginning to end. Why try to learn about humanity and our purpose before our Creator from below? Don't we rather need to hear from above and outside of our feeble and broken self-understanding?*

called "traditional" Christian teaching on sexuality and gender identity is being abandoned for a more faithful, *[faithful to whom?]* Christ-centered, *[except when He talks about the unchanging Law of God]* and, we believe, more biblical understanding of sexuality and *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."* (2 Timothy 4:3-4) gender identity that magnifies the creativity of God and celebrates the wide diversity in God's creation of humanity.

A new day is dawning in the Church, and all Christians are being called to step out boldly and unapologetically in affirmation and celebration of our LGBT+ siblings as equal participants in the Kingdom of God.

[Jesus said,] "Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires...He does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:43-44)

Therefore, in the hope of serving the Church of Jesus Christ and promoting greater reformation and reconciliation between the Church and the LGBT+ community, this coalition of Christian leaders offer the following affirmations and denials.