ROLLING HILLS
COMMUNITY CHURCH

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The family of Rolling Hills is a group of diverse people united in our commitment to *reaching the world, one person at a time, as we learn to think, love, and live like Jesus, and to reproduce that in the lives of others*. This means that we seek to be in real community together, where it's safe to be known and walk alongside each other as we pursue Jesus together. When we are in genuine relationships with others who are being guided by Jesus, as revealed in the Bible, God transforms us. He takes what is broken in us and makes it whole. Then, as we experience our own love relationship with God, our heart for the needs of others cannot remain indifferent. As a church family, we are motivated to move toward the people and needs in our community with love and compassion. We believe God is at work in us, as well as through us to positively impact our community, region, and world.

Having a shared understanding of what we believe as a church, and having agreed upon which beliefs are essential to the gospel, central to formational discipleship to Christ, and important to our mission as a church, Rolling Hills holds to the beliefs found in this Doctrinal Statement. Our Doctrinal Statement is not an abstract intellectual exercise on paper and pixel. These doctrinal beliefs represent the root and fruit of a lived faith—a genuine whole-life relationship of love and union with our Maker, Savior, and Lord. Our mission to reach the world one person at a time as we learn to think, love, and live like Jesus and reproduce that in the lives of others is shaped by these beliefs. Our heart is that this Doctrinal Statement will not just guide our faith, but encourage, convict, inspire, and propel us to worship God with our whole lives.

Essential: Foundations of Christian Faith

We believe these foundational truths are essential in order to know who God is, who we are, and where we find our ultimate hope. These truths provide the basis for understanding the nature, character and eternal purposes of God, the image-bearing, yet sinful and fallen nature of humanity that separates us from God, and the good news of God's redemptive plan through Jesus to reconcile sinners, establish his reign, and restore creation that offers hope and salvation to all people.

Central: Being Formed into Christlikeness

God’s work of salvation has continual impact as we learn to think, love and live like Jesus. Though this list is far from exhaustive, we believe God has given clarity on how we are to live and thrive as He transforms us into His likeness for His glory. All Rolling Hills members who aspire to step into positions of spiritual leadership are to aspire toward this life.

Important: Beliefs and Practices

We believe the Essential and Central doctrines of our faith are revealed by God to us in the Bible and are true. However, there are other important Beliefs and Practices about which Christians of good faith differ in their interpretation and application, while still handling the Bible with integrity. This being so, we believe we can still walk in unity towards God’s mission in our faith family with any follower of Jesus Christ who holds to the Essential and Central doctrines of our faith. Yet for the sake of unity, leaders and teachers within Rolling Hills are to know and accurately represent the following positions as stated below.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ESSENTIAL: FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

GOD (1)
THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST (1)
THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (1)
THE BIBLE (1)
HUMANITY (2)
SALVATION (2)
- GOD'S CALLING (2)
- REGENERATION (2)
- JUSTIFICATION (3)
- SANCTIFICATION (3)
- PERSEVERANCE (3)
- GLORIFICATION (4)

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (4)
RESURRECTION AND THE ETERNAL STATE (5)

CENTRAL: BEING FORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (6)
THE CHURCH (6)
THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (7)
THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (7)
- GIFTED INDIVIDUALS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH (8)
- GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GIFTS (8)

BAPTISM (9)
- THREE ASPECTS OF BAPTISM (9)

COMMUNION (9)
SHARING THE GOOD NEWS (9)
CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (10)
GENEROSITY (11)
PROCEDURE FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE (12)
MARRIAGE, SEX AND SEXUALITY (13)
DIVORCE AND SEPARATION (14)
GENDER AND HUMAN IDENTITY (18)
RECONCILIATION OF RACES IN GOD'S KINGDOM (20)
PRAYERS FOR THE SICK (22)

IMPORTANT BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

THE DOCTRINE OF TONGUES (23)
THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS (24)
THE GIFT OF PROPHECY (24)
ANGELS (25)
WOMEN IN MINISTRY (25)
UNIVERSAL CHURCH, LOCAL CHURCH, AND ISRAEL (28)
END TIMES EVENTS AND TIMING (28)

ESSENTIAL: FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

ROLLING HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH HOLDS TO THE FOLLOWING DOCTRINAL TRUTHS:

GOD

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, also called the Holy Trinity (Matt 28:19).

Father: John 6:27;1 Timothy 6:15-16; 1 Cor. 8:6
Son: John 10:30, 33; Hebrews 1:3
Holy Spirit: 2 Corinthians 3:17; John 15:26

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

We believe that by the miracle of the virgin birth the Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God in order to reveal God and to redeem humanity; that He died for our sins (the sins of all people) as a substitutionary sacrifice and rose bodily from the dead for our justification; and that He is now exalted at the right hand of God, Head of the Church and Lord of the individual believer, fulfilling His ministry as our Great High Priest and Advocate. We believe that Jesus Christ died, was buried and was raised from the dead after 3 days (I Corinthians 15:3-6). We believe in the personal second coming of our Lord to set up His earthly Kingdom and to reign over redeemed Israel and all the nations of the world.

Matthew 1:18-20, Luke 24, John 1:1-14, Romans 5:6-11, Hebrews 8,1 John 2:1,
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:4-6

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. His ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of sin, regenerates the believer, and places him in the Church, which is the Body of Christ. We believe that He indwells, guides, instructs, comforts, gifts, and empowers the Christian for godly living and service, and that He seals and keeps the believer until the Lord comes.

John 14:15-25; John 16:5-15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:13-14

THE BIBLE

We believe that the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are inspired by God, are inerrant in all of their parts in the original writings, and are the Christian's final authority in faith and conduct.

2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21

HUMANITY

We believe the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created in the image of God, but that they sinned, incurring not only physical death, but also spiritual death. Through birth, spiritual death is inherited by every member of Adam's race. We believe that humanity is subject to the power of Satan and has within themselves no possible means of recovery or salvation. Only when a person reaches an awareness of this reality are they in a position to receive the free gift of salvation.

Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:23, 5:12-21, 6:23

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is the free gift of God, neither merited nor secured in part or in whole by any virtue or work of man or woman. Salvation is received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all true believers have, as present possessions, the gift of eternal life, a perfect righteousness, adoption into the family of God, deliverance and complete security from all condemnation, every spiritual resource needed for life and godliness, and the divine guarantee that they shall never perish. We believe that such a salvation can never be lost or forfeited.

John 10:28; John 17:3; Romans 8:1, 10:9-10; Ephesians 1:1-10, 2:8-9; 1 John 5:11-13; Acts 4:12

GOD'S CALLING

"Those whom He predestined, these He also called" (Romans 8:30). God's calling consists in His effectual getting the attention of an individual and confronting him with the beauty of the gospel in such a way that he embraces the gospel in faith. It is more than merely His general call (Matthew 22:14), which He issues to all people through general and special revelation. God calls each individual whom He has chosen at a given point in that person's life (1 Corinthians 7:22). For God's calling to be effectual it must include some kind of transformation of the heart as one is drawn to Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is also clear that men and women are moral agents because they act voluntarily and are responsible to God for their actions. God never forces any human to do anything against their own will. We all have the choice to fully accept or reject Christ's offer of forgiveness of sin. (Rom. 10:11-13; John 12:48) Therefore there is some mystery of both God's effectual call and humanity's use of free will, and both are at work simultaneously. (Phil. 2:12-13)

REGENERATION

Regeneration is the transformation of heart. It is God's act of "causing us to be born again" (1 Peter 1:3). This new birth is necessary because all people are spiritually dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1) and unable to submit to God's Law (Romans 8:8). Regeneration is the great promise of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:38-41; Ezekiel 36:26ff). It is God's act of transforming our hard and impenitent heart into a heart that is responsive to His promptings.

He gives us a new set of inclinations (Jeremiah 31:33) by which we begin to prefer to humble ourselves to His offer of mercy and submit to His gracious will - the very

thing we were unable to do apart from the regenerating power of the Spirit (Romans 8:7). Regeneration is not something which is initiated by man (John 3:4, Titus 3:5), but it is God's act through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

JUSTIFICATION

When a person puts his faith in Christ, God justifies him (Galatians 2:16). Justification is God's act of forgiving our sins (Romans 4:6-8), declaring us innocent, and putting us into a right relationship with Himself so that we can now enjoy peace with Him (Romans 5:1). It is both something the believer experiences now (Romans 5:1) and something he anticipates in the age to come (Galatians 5:5). God does not justify us in response to our performing works of the Law (i.e. legalistic strivings to earn God's favor, cf. Romans 3:20), but in response to our faith (Genesis 15:6). Justification is the judicial aspect of salvation (2 Tim 1:9). God graciously and fully pardons the sinner who trusts in Jesus for their salvation. The righteousness of Jesus is imputed to the new Jesus follower so that God views them as positionally holy and blameless.

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is God's act of setting his people apart for His purpose (1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2). In this sense it is similar to His "calling" (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). But sanctification also refers to the process whereby God causes us to share His holiness (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:10). This does not happen all at once, nor will it happen completely in this life (1 John 1:8, Philippians 2:12-13). Neither will the progress always be steady; there will be setbacks (Romans 7:21ff). Yet this progress in holiness is essential, and therefore we must "pursue the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord"(Hebrews 12:14). But we must be ever so careful how we pursue it. We must never think of sanctification as adding works of the Law (i.e. legalistic strivings) to our faith. The Christian life is a life of faith from start to finish. Our initial response was faith and our continued response must be faith (Galatians 3:2-3).

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance in faith and the obedience of faith to the end of a person's life are evidence of a person's salvation and genuine conversion. (1 Corinthians 15:2, Hebrews 3:14, 2 Peter 1:5-11). God will see to it that His people persevere in faith (John 10: 28-30, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 1 Peter 1:3-5). The way in which God causes His children to endure is by giving us magnificent promises (2 Peter 1:3-4), which will be ours if we run the race, and by giving us terrible warnings of what will come if we fall away (Hebrews 10:26ff). We are commanded to have and maintain full assurance of our salvation (Hebrews 6:11, 10:22). Yet if we are tending to be arrogant about our status as though it were due to something in ourselves, we are warned to "take heed lest we fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We are to test ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5) and to be diligent to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). A clear evidence that we are God's is that we are growing in love for others (1 John 3:14, 4:7-8). God keeps His children eternally secure by giving them a lively longing for His promises and a healthy fear of His warnings. Those who make some kind of beginning in the Christian faith, but do not continue, give evidence that they never really had saving faith (Colossians 1:22, Hebrews 3:14, 1 John 2:19, 28-29)

GLORIFICATION

Glorification is God's act of "transforming the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory"(Romans 8:23, 1 Corinthians 15:51ff, Philippians 3:20-21). This is God's final act in His process of saving us and transforming us into the image of His Son (Romans 8:29-30). It will take place at the consummation of this age when Christ appears (Philippians 3:20f). Christ is in us now as "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27), and everyone who has this hope of glory "purifies himself just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). So in a very real sense we are in the process of being glorified now and we are in the process of becoming like Christ. "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory…." (2 Corinthians 3:18). Through suffering with Christ in the present age we will be glorified with Him in the age to come (Romans 8:17). This is the climax and goal of salvation. We who are "vessels of mercy" have been prepared beforehand for glory (Romans 9:13). Nothing else could satisfy our heart's craving for enduring joy more than to behold the glory of God. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after…to behold the beauty of the Lord…." (Psalms 27:4).

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is twofold. First, it is the immersion of a person into the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion, at which time he is empowered to be a witness to God's work in his life (Acts 1:8). Second, it is the immersion of a believer into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). When a person is immersed in the Holy Spirit he is empowered to focus on the growth of others rather than just his own growth. He begins to discover and use his gifts, and work to build up the Body of Christ. The ultimate manifestation of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the manifold wisdom and power of God is released through the CORPORATE BODY of believers, as each carries out ministry together.

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul states an emphatic command to be filled or controlled with the Spirit. It literally means, "Being kept/filled/controlled with the Spirit." It is a command that includes the idea of an ongoing God consciousness in one's life. Every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit in all His fullness from the moment he believes. Romans 8:9 says, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." At salvation the believer is baptized by means of the Spirit into the Body of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit until the day of redemption.

Acts 1:8, 2:1-13; Ephesians 4:16

RESURRECTION AND THE ETERNAL STATE

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people. Believers are resurrected to enjoy eternal life with God. Unbelievers are resurrected to experience judgment and then eternal suffering apart from God.

We believe that at the death of the body, the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and remain there until the resurrection of the body. When Christ returns, the souls of the dead will be reunited with their resurrected bodies to be with Christ forever in glory. Those who are alive on the earth at His coming will have their bodies transformed and made fit for a new heaven and earth at that time.

We believe in literal hell, and that in hell unbelievers will be punished with everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power because they have chosen to be opposed to God (1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 20:1-9; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15).

CENTRAL: BEING FORMED INTO CHRISTLIKENESS

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe God's grace not only provides forgiveness for us but continues to transform our lives to be more and more like Jesus. Jesus summarizes this life when he stated, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." We are called with the holy calling to live not according to the desire of the flesh (the old nature within, opposed to God), but according to the Spirit of God. We believe the grace of God empowers His followers to live a life that is growing in reflecting His character of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We trust the Spirit of God to lead the child of God into paths of righteousness.

Once a person is saved he does not have license to habitually act in an ungodly manner. If a believer continues to sin, that is, habitually refuses to repent, the Lord will discipline him (Hebrews 12:5-11). In fact, God's discipline is an indication that one is truly God's child, a repentant response being an even stronger indication that one truly believes. The ultimate discipline, when a believer consistently refuses the grace of God, is that the Lord removes him from this life. (1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

God calls us His children when we believe. If one sins, it does not mean he is no longer a child, rather he is no longer an obedient child and therefore needs to be restored in fellowship. When a professing Christian continues to sin, that could be an indication that there never really was a commitment to Christ (Mark 4:3-9).

Romans 8; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 2:8-10

THE CHURCH

We believe that the Universal Church is composed of all who, through saving faith in Jesus Christ, have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Those who are members of the true Church are called to participation in the local church.

This spiritual body has Christ as its head (1 Cor 12). The church was prophesied by Jesus and began on the day of Pentecost (Matt 16:18; Acts 2, 11).The church exists to bring glory to God by promoting the Kingdom of God through evangelism and edification**.**

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 10:25; Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18; Matt 16:18; Eph 4:11-12).

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Greek word, *pleroo* (filled), gives two ideas: pressure and permeation. To be filled or controlled, "pressured," by the Holy Spirit is to be moved along in our Christian life by God Himself—a moment by moment enterprise bent on accomplishing the will of God. Pleroo also carries the idea of permeation or total control. A person who is filled in this sense is no longer under his own control, but under the control of that which dominates him. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not to have Him progressively added to one's life, but to continually allow Him to control more and more of one's life.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is accomplished when a person surrenders his will, intellect, and emotions, as well as his time, talent, and treasure to Him. In the Ephesians 5:18-6:9 passages, the results are clear: speaking to others in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; being thankful for all things (5:19-20) and being in submission to fellow believers (5:21). Wives submit to husbands (5:22-24); husbands will love their wives with self-sacrificing service (5:25-33); children will obey their parents (6:1-3); etc.

Colossians 3:16-25 is the parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18-6:9. Colossians emphasizes that the word of Christ must dwell in us richly, so that in all wisdom we will be teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Being filled and controlled is the result of having the word of God infused into our total beings just as Colossians suggests. The Holy Spirit wishes to speak the Lord's words as they are found in the Scriptures. So then we study and allow His words to permeate our lives, and as we consciously allow Him to control us, we are filled by the Holy Spirit.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We hold to the truth that God has granted specific gifts to the Body of Christ, and that those gifts are to be manifested for the purpose of service within the Body (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). As they are defined Biblically, all the gifts are in operation today. However, not all the gifts are equally predominant. Following is a list of gifts or divine enablements (charismata) as they are found in scripture, but we do not believe this list is exhaustive.

ROMANS 12:6-8 1

1. Prophecy
2. Serving
3. Teaching
4. Exhortation
5. Giving
6. Leadership
7. Mercy

I CORINTHIANS 12:7-11, 28

8. Word of wisdom
9. Word of knowledge
10. Faith
11. Gifts of healings
12. Miraculous powers
13. Discernment
14. Tongues
15. Interpretation of Tongues
16. Helps
17. Administration

GIFTED INDIVIDUALS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

Four types of gifted individuals are given to the Body to equip the saints for service (Ephesians 4:11-12). These four types are present today, and their ministry is operational in some sense or other.

APOSTLES

Used in a secondary sense, he is not one who literally walked with Christ, but one who has a first hand experience with Christ and who is "sent out" to establish new churches in areas where the gospel message either has never been heard or is lacking to some degree.

Romans 1:1-5

PROPHETS

Used in a secondary sense of those who speak a specific message from God to the Christian community, usually in an itinerant manner. These gifted individuals are not proclaiming new truth that can be considered additional Biblical truth but are speaking God's truth from the Bible. Usually they address specific subjects that the Christian Church needs to hear.

Acts 13:1-5, 13-16, 32-35, 21:7-10

PASTOR-TEACHERS

Those gifted to shepherd the local church, using their compassion for people and teaching truth publicly and individually.

Romans 12:6-7, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4

EVANGELISTS

Those who specifically can and do win others to Christ by gaining a hearing of those outside of Christ. Evangelism can take place on a large scale, as from a crusade platform, or in an individual setting.

Acts 21:8, 2 Timothy 4:1-5

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GIFTS

The gifts are to be used for the building up of the Body. When the gifts function properly, the focal point will never be directed at the gift, but at the gift giver—Yahweh Himself or Christ Himself.

The gifts are discovered by Scriptural awareness of the gifts themselves, to begin with: through experimentation, that is, by serving others in various capacities to see which might be feasible; through the Holy Spirit as He might manifest a gift to an individual, strongly inclining that individual toward one type of service or another; and through recognition by others.

Each believer has at least one gift, but can have several gifts according to the need of the situation or the need of the Body he is placed in.

BAPTISM

We believe that Baptism is one of two ordinances left by Christ for the Church today. Baptism is an outward sign of the inward reality that a person has turned from man's way to God's way. While Baptism is not necessary for salvation, we believe it is an essential step in the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. To Baptize literally means to dip or immerse; therefore, the mode of Baptism here at Rolling Hills is immersion. We understand Baptism as a beautiful public statement of one's faith in Christ and therefore a great privilege and step of obedience to Christ.

Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-41

THREE ASPECTS OF BAPTISM

There is one Baptism (Ephesians 4:4), but there are three aspects of that Baptism. They are: in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, 20).

The first aspect of Baptism, or immersion in the name of the Father, is synonymous with John's baptism, found in Luke 3:3, which pictures initial repentance. When one repents he turns from his sins and turns toward the Father, thus Baptism "in the name of the Father." Another aspect of Baptism is immersion in the name of Jesus Christ. This truth is found in Romans 6:1-6, and it pictures one's "death to self" and being "made to live a new life" (v. 4). The third aspect of Baptism is immersion in the name of the Holy Spirit. This concept is realized when the Holy Spirit lives in a person, empowering that individual to live a sanctified life (Acts 1:8). Baptism is also a statement to the world that one has begun the process of repentance, of learning to die to self daily, and of allowing the Holy Spirit to enable that one to live a holy life.

COMMUNION

We believe that the Lord's table is the second ordinance left to the Church by Jesus Christ. Partaking of Communion is a symbolic act which represents one's present relationship and abiding fellowship with Christ. The elements specifically cause us to remember His broken body as payment for man's sin and His blood as a picture of the New Covenant which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Mark 14:22-25, John 6:53-65, 1 Corinthians 11:23-36

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

We believe that inasmuch as it is through Christ that God reconciles the world to Himself, it is the purpose of the Church, in addition to building up every member of the Body, to make Christ known to the whole world. Every member of the Body shares in this purpose. Believers are sent by Christ to communicate the good news with grace and truth, introducing the non- Christian to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. We recognize many methods of evangelism, acknowledging that it is the Holy Spirit who ultimately brings people to Christ.

Mark 16:15; John 17:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:12-15; Matthew 28:19

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

Christian liberty is a predominant doctrine in the Word of God. Liberty is the freedom for believers to carry out the principles of the Word of God in ways that differ from one believer to another. In certain areas of conduct not specifically condoned or condemned by Scripture, believers must choose whether to participate or refrain. Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 10:14-33 are key passages in this regard. Four principles guide the believer in these "gray" areas:

1. PRINCIPLE OF WISDOM

1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23

Within the confines of all that God has commanded, everything is lawful. However, even within those confines, not every application of the principles of liberty is beneficial or profitable. One must ask, "Is what I am doing profitable spiritually, socially, intellectually, and physically?"

2. PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

1 Corinthians 6:12

"Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything."
Although one might have Scriptural freedom for an activity, if one is enslaved by it, it is wrong to continue.

3. PRINCIPLE OF EDIFICATION

1 Corinthians 10:23

"Everything is permissible, but not everything is constructive." One has liberty, but does the use of that liberty build people up spiritually? It may be that an activity does in fact encourage or stimulate others in a positive way; it may be that an activity is neutral. If, however, an activity produces negative results for those in one's sphere of ministry, freedom in that area must be curtailed and that activity stopped.

4. PRINCIPLE OF EXAMPLE

Romans 14:1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 10:31-11:1

We are free to exercise our choices, but must realize that as Christ's followers we are to be examples of Godly living. Our actions can be a "stumbling block" to cause a "weaker brother" to sin. A stumbling block occurs only when one's freedom entices a weak person to violate his culturally dictated conscience, and to enter into action he thinks is scripturally forbidden. A "weaker brother" is a young Christian who is not educated in the knowledge of the Word. Weak persons are to be taught the Word so they may become strong. A stumbling block or an offense does not occur simply because someone disagrees intellectually or even theologically.

The following are four types of individuals within the Body of Christ today. As maturing Christians, we ought to strive to be either the first or second.

Mature Non-Participating Christian

One who chooses not to participate in an activity that would cause someone to stumble in their faith.

Mature Participating Christian

One who exercises his freedom to participate in activities being aware of the four previous principles.

In Romans 14:3 a powerful instruction is given to each mature Christian.

Genuine Weaker Brother

A young, untaught Christian whose conscience is culturally, but not Biblically, educated. The goal is to have this person grow up in Christ and be Biblically based.

Professional Weaker Brother

A person who feels it is his role to correct Christians who participate in activities he finds objectionable. This person is out of line and usually borders on legalism, and ought to be confronted with his behavior.

GENEROSITY

Generosity is not about how much we make, but rather about the grace of God at work in our lives (2 Cor 8:1). It is birthed not from obeying a God who wants from us, it is birthed out of our understanding of what God has done for us (Isaiah 53:5, 7, 10-11). Yet, God repeatedly challenges us in this area because He knows our hearts can easily be deceived by greed (Luke 12:15). The result of greed never creates a tender heart for the sufferings of others, but instead latches onto the lie that what I need to keep from worrying about money is more money. God teaches us the financial principle of scattering rather than gathering (Proverbs 11:24). If we focus on generosity and scattering the resources He's given us we will not be in want. But if you seek to hoard what God has given, you may very well find yourself in want. So we are commanded to invest the resources God has given us into efforts that are attempting to make an eternal impact in people's lives (Matt 19:21; 1 Timothy 6:18-19).

In the Old Testament the idea of a Tithe (10%) was established as a way to respond with gratitude and a sense of worship to God's provision in our lives (Genesis 14). In so doing, God is not seeking to raise money but to raise people by connecting them to a kingdom reality. Tithing became part of the Mosaic Law (Deut 14:22-23) with the idea that they were to respect and worship God (Gen 14, 28, Deut 14), all participate, planned and proportionate (Deut 16, Numbers 18), support ministry and ministers (Numbers 18:21-24, 2 Chron 31:4-18), help the poor and those in need (Deut 14:28).

In the New Testament Jesus mentions the Tithe twice, but both in the context of legalistic abuse (Luke 18:9-14, Matthew 23:23). It is rarely mentioned elsewhere. Rather in the New Testament the focus turns to sacrificial giving that reflects God's generosity toward us. So the bar is raised, rather than lowered. This generosity is to be for the same purposes as the OT i.e. gratitude (2 Cor 8, 9; Phil 4:19; Matt 2:11), all participate in God's mission (1 Cor 16:2), support for ministry and ministers (Gal 6:6, 1 Tim 5:18, Rom 15, 1 Cor 9:13-14), and to help the poor and those in need (1 Tim 5, Lk 16:19-31, Lk 3:11, Matt 19:21).

As we grow in becoming more like Jesus our generosity will grow as well. So we see the tithe as a tool for us to use as we apply the principles of generosity, knowing Paul challenges us to think in terms of maximum generosity (2 Cor 8). So we pray and seek God's guidance in reflecting His generosity, understanding that means we will choose to live below a standard of living that we could afford without being generous.

PROCEDURE FOR CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Discipline is not a negative word, but ultimately a positive one. Biblical discipline involves training and is not unrelated to the word disciple. To disciple means "to conform someone to a standard." Church discipline specifically means that we aid in bringing believers into line with God's standard for His glory, the process of His Kingdom, and the restoration of the individual as well. Matthew 18:15-20 is the classic text for church discipline and its process. This passage teaches that when one directly sins against another or indirectly sins by doing wrong, there is a responsibility to approach that brother or sister with his sin. There are four steps to follow if one is sinned against:

STEP ONE | TELLING HIM HIS SIN · MATTHEW 18:15 B

The present imperative "go" conveys the idea that you should continue to go and pursue him without being distracted. The second verb, in the aorist imperative, conveys the idea of being convincing in getting the point across. Galatians 6:1 helps us to see the attitude we should have in confronting a sinning believer: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." Verse 2 says, "Carry each other's burdens and in this you will fulfill the law of Christ." What is the law of Christ? It is the royal law (James 2:8), the law of liberty (James 1:25) "…the law of love." So you go with a love that desires to help him carry the burden, and you go in meekness to restore him. If he is restored, you have won a brother; no further steps are necessary.

STEP TWO | TAKING SOME WITNESSES · V. 16

When there has been a definite refusal to repent, then you must take one or two more believers with you. These are not necessarily one or two people who saw or who knew about the sin. Rather, they are witnesses of the confrontation who can come back and confirm the words that were spoken there. Their presence is as much a protection of the one being approached as it is for the one approaching. It would be presumptuous to think that one person could make some ultimate determination about right or wrong, especially one who may be somewhat bitter because he has been sinned against.

STEP THREE | TELLING THE CHURCH · V. 17 A

We are to tell the whole assembly when a sinning believer fails to respond to the confrontation of the witnesses. This may mean a public proclamation to everyone or to key leaders of small groups so that they know there has been a refusal to respond to God's offer of repentance. Many churches choose to make this public at evening or special Communion services.* What is always the purpose of discipline? Restoration! So what do we tell the church? "Church, go after him to win him back. An individual went - no response. Two or three went - no response. Now we will all go and drown him in our concern."

* In communicating the discipline process to the church, we typically communicate to the leaders and members in the person's circle of influence.

STEP FOUR | TREATING HIM AS AN OUTSIDER · V. 17 B

If a person sins, and refuses to repent after the church knows, we are to treat him as if he were outside our fellowship. He is not invited to associate with or participate in the blessings and the benefits of the Christian assembly. The ultimate purpose is that the sinning brother will come back to fellowship with God through repentance and back into unity with his brothers and sisters in Christ. Because of potential lawsuits, church discipline that eventuates in public dismissal from church membership applies only to those who have committed to Rolling Hills by signing the Membership Covenant, which is made available at Belong to our Family.

MARRIAGE, SEX AND SEXUALITY

We believe marriage is much more than simply a cultural institution or legal contract. The Bible clearly communicates that God created marriage to be a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman. This definition was affirmed by Jesus Himself (Matthew 19:1-9). Sex is a gift created by God to be enjoyed and protected within the confines of a marriage relationship. (Genesis 2:24, 25; Matthew 19:1-9; 1Cor 6:9-11)

While we affirm covenantal marriage between a man and a woman and the family as described in the Bible, we recognize that not everyone is married nor will be married and this does not make them of lesser value or importance before God or in the family of God or suggest they may have any less of a fulfilled and meaningful life.

We acknowledge Jesus calls his followers to a lifestyle that is countercultural as we allow His grace to make us into new kinds of people. Jesus clearly calls us to a life of sexual integrity and purity. At the same time, we recognize we are a faith family made up of imperfect people and realize no one among us is morally perfect. We believe every person is created in the image of God and therefore of immeasurable value and worthy of our love and respect. Therefore, our desire is to create an environment that is safe and accepting to all people. Whether you are single, married, LGBTQ, straight, we are all learning together how to think, love and live more like Jesus.

We also believe sexual attraction whether same sex or heterosexual is not wrong nor a sin. However, when attraction turns to lust or sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship as defined by scripture, then this violates what Jesus has made clear to us in regards to our sexual purity (Matt 5:27-31; Matt 19:4-6).

We believe our primary identity is not found in our sexuality, but rather in who God is and who we are in relationship to him. (John 1:12; Col 2:9-10; Rom 6:6; Gen 1:27; Gal 3:27-28; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Col 3:1-3). We desire to come alongside one another and encourage each other as we submit ourselves to our loving God, who made us in His image and knows how to lead us into a life of flourishing and meaning.

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Marriage is a sacred union established by God to be a covenant relationship between one man and one woman for life. We understand that marriage was and is meant by God to be such an emotional, relational, physical and spiritual bond that it is defined as each spouse being "one flesh" with the other and as such the marital covenant should not be separated by anything other than the death of a spouse. However, our reality is we live in a broken world, where sin temporarily reigns. And each of us are sinners ourselves and our actions can lead to broken marriages and divorce.

Divorce is a painful and problematic issue for many people, including Christians. Virtually all of us have at least personally witnessed the anguish of a broken home. The Lord has not, however, left us ignorant about this vital subject. Since marriage is a reflection of His commitment to His people and is designed more for our holiness than our happiness (e.g., Isa 54:5-6; Hos 1:1ff, 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33), God has given many instructive words about marriage, divorce, separation, and re-marriage.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON DIVORCE

God emphatically declares, "I hate divorce" (Mal 2:16). His pattern is that a Christian man and woman be united in marriage until the death of one separates them, at which time the surviving spouse is free to remarry another believer (e.g., Gen 2:24; Rom 7:2-3; 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14).

Despite His disdain for divorce, in rare instances He permits it as a concession to a person's sin for the protection of the wronged party. In Matt 19:3-9 Christ teaches that divorce is an accommodation to man's sin and is in violation of God's purpose for the intimate unity of the marriage bond. It is a concession for the wronged party due to the other partner's insensitivity to God, which is defined as "hardness of heart" (Matt 19:8) and means that the wronged party no longer has to remain in the broken situation (Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:10-15).

DIVORCE AS CONCESSION TO MAN'S HARD HEARTS

God's desire for a couple in marital crisis is first for reconciliation.

The provision of "the blood of Christ" to restore the relationship between repentant sinners and the Almighty God through Christ's work on the cross (Acts 17:30-31).

The provision of "divorce," although not God's original design or desire, but man's was permitted by God to protect the innocent spouse of a broken marriage covenant.

Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 19:6b "What God has joined together, let man not separate." He did not say "man can not separate," but that he should not separate it.

We certainly agree, but as sin separated our original relationship with God, sin can also separate the members of a marital covenant as Jesus explains below.

Matthew 19:8a: "Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard."

In his statement "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives…" Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in which divorce clearly ended the marriage and permitted a subsequent remarriage:

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it

to her and sends her from his house, 2 and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3 and ***her second husband*** *dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4* ***then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again*** *after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."*

The man in this patriarchal culture would divorce for any reason and free himself to marry another, yet the divorced woman was not given such freedom. Moses' certificate of divorce especially helped the woman to be freed from her husband once a certificate of divorce was given.

Clearly Jesus knew he was talking about "divorce" here, i.e., the "dissolution of marriage" for that is what divorce is. He didn't have to explain that to his listeners; they already understood what he was referring to for as we stated earlier it was a divisive issue among "God's chosen people" even in Christ's day. The text that Jesus referred to clearly stated that the original marriage was ended or it wouldn't have included the words "her second husband," "her first husband," or "to marry her again." The question about "divorce" intuitively included the question of "remarriage" or Jesus wouldn't have referred back to a text that included both divorce and remarriage. In Deuteronomy 24:1-4 the "certificate of divorce" was given so that the husband could remarry.

BIBLICAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE
In a marriage where one or both partners are believers, God allows—but does not require—divorce in only two situations.

1. **Adultery Exception** – The first exception to the general rule of lifelong marriage is fornication. In context, this term refers primarily to adultery (the sexual, physical unfaithfulness of a marriage partner) and includes homosexuality, incest, and prostitution (Matt 5:32, 19:9; cf. 1 Cor 5:1). Adultery will also take place even after the "official" dissolution of the marriage if the divorce is on non-biblical grounds (Matt 5:32; Mark 10:11-12; Rom 7:3).

2. **Abandonment Exception** – The second reason for permitting a divorce is in cases where a non-believing mate refuses to live with his or her believing spouse and initiates a divorce. (1 Cor 7:13-15).

BIBLICAL AND NON-BIBLICAL
Mark 10:11: When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Luke 16:18: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

There are neither Biblical grounds for, nor a right to a divorce in these verses. We would define them as "non-biblical" divorces, but it is likely that there is a guilty and an innocent party within these divorces which would have to be determined by the individual details of the divorce.

When you get divorced you are divorced. The reason sexual activity is called adultery in a subsequent marriage is that you have no right to be remarried if you are the guilty and/or unrepentant party of either a biblical or non-biblical divorce. In God's sight you are divorced, but you shouldn't be.

We believe God in His mercy, recognizing the hardness of even the genuine Jesus follower's heart, has made some provision for dissolving marriage upon certain circumstances in order to protect the innocent. We believe a legal "divorce" does in fact "dissolve" the marriage covenant, in keeping with God's accommodation of the 'certificate of divorce.' We further believe re-marriage after divorce is lawful for the "innocent" spouse, if in fact there is one. We further believe that even the 'guilty party' of a divorce, if and when he or she has sincerely repented and sought forgiveness from the innocent party should be allowed to remarry. (Matt 5:24).

SEPARATION

Separations in marriage are not specifically addressed in Scripture. However, it may be determined that a separation—either through civil punishment of the offender, court-ordered separation, mutually agreed upon separation, or unilaterally decided separation—is prudent for the safety of an endangered spouse and protection of any children in the home. RHCC also recognizes that civil authorities may play a role in these matters.

DIVORCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Although Christians should never view God's grace as a license to sin (e.g., Rom 6:1-2), sins relating to the marriage relationship are forgivable by God. Jesus Himself modeled a gracious spirit toward adulterous people whom He was leading to spiritual awakening (John 4:5-30; 8:1-11; cf. King David's story in 1 Sam 13:14; 2 Sam 11:3-4; Ps 51; Acts 13:22).

We realize this argument is somewhat different, but believe there are biblical principles here that apply.

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah the Hittite killed. When Nathan brought God's message to David and David repented of his sin, God disciplined him, but He did not tell David to "put away" Bathsheba. He allowed the marriage to stand. He disciplined them both for their sin (they were both guilty), but David and Bathsheba were permitted to continue their marriage. Then God gave them another son Solomon through which the human ancestry of both Mary the mother of Jesus and Joseph his father (it was thought) came and ultimately Christ and the Throne of David. The argument could be made that David was permitted to stay married because Uriah was dead, but wouldn't that make the argument that murder is in some way a lesser sin that divorce? We don't think so. Murder kills a person and divorce "kills" (so to speak) a marriage; both are

sin and both are forgivable. God forgave their sin, allowed the remarriage of David and Bathsheba and blessed it.

DIVORCE AND RECOVERY

In keeping with God's heart, RHCC strives to move people toward Christian maturity and spiritual wholeness regardless of their present marital state or history. Everyone is welcome at RHCC, and we do not consider divorced people to be second class citizens nor treat them as such.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is our clear position that domestic violence or abuse is wrong and cannot be tolerated in any way. We are committed to coming alongside individuals experiencing domestic violence and helping them recognize, address, and find freedom and safety from abuse.

1. Definition of Terms – Domestic violence (sometimes referred to as domestic abuse or Intimate Partner violence) occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner attempts to physically or psychologically dominate or harm the other. Abuse means to mistreat or misuse someone with the intent to dominate, control, or prevent them from making free choices. Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling, assaultive, and/or coercive behaviors that includes all forms of physical injury/abuse, sexual abuse, intimidation, verbal abuse, emotional abuse and spiritual abuse or threats of such.

2. RHCC's Encouragement – Our goal, in line with God's heart, (Eph. 5:2, Pr. 21:7, Mal. 2:16, Ps. 11:5, I John 4:18, will be to promote safety at all times, then reconciliation of relationships, first with God, and secondly between spouses and families (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Domestic violence must not be tolerated, and must be addressed. No one deserves to be abused – ever!

As a basic principle, we encourage a **ZERO TOLERANCE** for domestic violence or abuse in any relationship. We encourage clear communication, setting clear boundaries, and enforcing clear consequences for abusive behavior.

DIVORCE AND LEADERSHIP

We believe that a person who has been divorced can serve as an Elder, Community Group Leader, Committee Chairperson, or in other leadership roles only if that person has dealt with his past by way of confession, repentance, attempted restoration, or restoration and transformation. Following a divorce, there ought to be a period of up to one year before the individual in question is eligible for leadership. After the end of that period of time, the situation would be evaluated by the Elders or leadership core. This evaluation would take into consideration who initiated the divorce, what the circumstances were, what efforts were made toward restoration, their present walk with the Lord, their desired level of leadership, and how the issues leading to divorce have been dealt with.* In regards to an Elder role, special attention to a divorced person serving will take place so as not to cause an offense or to aid in the ruin of that individual's life. The leadership of Rolling Hills believes that the truths of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus, which require a person to be above reproach, is a doctrine that governs one's present life style; that is, setting aside the past, one must now have an established reputation for living righteously before God.

* This is also true for anyone having a significant and/or public moral failure in their past.

GENDER AND HUMAN IDENTITY

This is a position paper regarding the Biblical understanding of males and females as it relates to the transgender movement. The goal is not to build a wall, but that God might build up His church in truth and grace so that we can welcome everyone in to experience an abundant life with Him (1 Tim. 6:19; John 10:10). We also humbly recognize that the Christian Church's actions have not always reflected the love and truth of God to all people and this grieves us. At Rolling Hills we desire to walk alongside all who desire to learn more about and follow Jesus together, so He can transform us to think, love and live like Him.

Our Theological Understanding: We affirm the inherent honor, dignity and value of the two sexes as created in God's image – intentionally male and female – each bringing unique qualities to sexuality and relationships.

God created the first humans in His image; He created them male and female (Gen. 1:27). He made the woman to be distinct and yet of equal value to the man (Gen. 2:18-22). God created us as 'whole people.' We were created with a soul and body which exist in interacting duality of God's design. God depicts the existence of a man and a woman as essential to His creational plan, not as something that can be redefined by shifting cultural constructs. The two, male and female, are neither identical nor interchangeable. Therefore, actions that intend to undo or hide the sexed bodily component of a human seem to be a distortion or denial of a person's image-bearing nature and God's plan for His creation.

While men and women in Scripture may express their masculinity and femininity in a wonderful diversity of ways, Scripture still operates with the binary categories of men and women. You are one or the other. We also believe the rare genetic anomaly of intersex individuals does not undermine the creation design of two sexes.

Therefore, we do resist the attempt being made at a cultural and legal level to view gender as a matter of choice. A man's chromosomes cannot be engineered into female chromosomes. Altering one's appearance cosmetically or surgically cannot change the underlying reality of a person's biological makeup.

Our Pastoral Understanding: We also recognize that caught up in all of this are deeply hurting people. Those who experience gender dysphoria are precious to God and to us. Their internal struggle is real and to be taken seriously. Gender dysphoria is when a person's emotional and or psychological sense of themselves does not align with their birth sex. Each person needs to know that, even though God has stated a different perspective than their own, God and His church do love every person. We do not trivialize one's experience nor seek to explain it away with quick, easy answers. We are there for all people, are ready to listen and deeply desire what is best for them. Compassion and dignity for dysphoric individuals is not in tension with disagreeing with transgenderism as a social movement.

To differing degrees and in differing ways, every human struggles with the brokenness of his or her own body, desires, emotions and thoughts. We all struggle to fill the internal voids of meaning, significance, identity and peace that can only be found in a relationship

with God. The Bible speaks of people with real identity issues such as Rahab, Gideon, Ruth, Saul, Paul, Zacchaeus, Peter, and Mary, to name just a few. We often seek to fulfill that internal need with achievement, relationships, sexuality, power and an unending number of other attempts. In a sense every one of us has touches of dysphoria in one area or another. But ultimately we believe our identity is not something we achieve but rather is received from our creator as image bearers meant to be in a harmonious relationship with God (Luke 10:27; Jeremiah 9:24, 24:7; Gen 1:26-27; 2:7). We believe our primary identity is not found in our sexuality, education, race or wealth, but rather in who God is and who we are in relationship with Him. God has fearfully and wonderfully made each one of us (Psalm 139:14). We have been created male or female, gifted and ordained to do good (Gen 5:2; Eph 2:10). We are fully known and perfectly loved and pursued by God, who held nothing back in His desire to offer the chance to be reunited with Him through Jesus Christ. This is the identity given to us by God that He asks us to fully embrace fully, and yet we often struggle to do so.

How is a follower of Jesus to engage with a person who is dysphoric? *James 1:19 says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"* Using active listening skills with others is both wise and loving and reflects God's character.

Knowing dysphoric people have been on a journey and that we're likely interacting with them several chapters into their story is important to remember. Having a desire to sit and actively listen to their story up to this point is very loving and helpful. It is wrong to trivialize someone's experience or assume gender dysphoria is a struggle they willfully chose. Instead, sit with this person whom God loves with genuine care and be willing to walk with them over time. No quick judgments or declarations will likely be, nor feel, helpful. Throughout scripture, and in every individual's story, are troubling times of pain and confusion. We often want to get through to them or run from them quickly without understanding all the 'whys,' but God often brings many redeeming things in the midst of the questioning, pain, adversity and confusion.

In this created-but-broken world, we understand that not all identities or feelings are to be accepted or fostered because we are all guided by a mixture of good and broken desires. We also recognize that many of our questions regarding our lives will remain a mystery to us. This doesn't mean they are a mystery to God, who is Sovereign, all-knowing and good. The Biblical story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption tells us that we should not be shocked when we experience desires that will not, in fact, bring about the wholeness we are seeking; and equally that we can never be self-righteous about how others struggle. We lovingly encourage all people to get back in touch with their creator and who He created them to be. As Jesus did, we must present the truth regarding God's best for people with humility, concern and compassion for the person and their story.

We desire to walk alongside anyone who is desiring to know God more.

RECONCILIATION OF RACES IN GOD'S KINGDOM

We believe the truth from God as revealed in the Bible is our guide for understanding Him, our relationship to God as well as our relationships with one another. This paper attempts to glean truth from God's written Word, that will guide us toward healthy and fruitful relationships with one another. This is especially true for our nation which continues to suffer great pain from racial division and injustice. We must follow the voice of God and His Word over the plans of man or we risk further harm to our relationships with each other and our very souls. We believe as we follow God, our lives will be enriched with joy and He will be glorified.

Racial Reconciliation Defined

We believe we share a God-given humanity with all people and therefore are committed to the fair and just treatment for all and are committed to confront any individual and/or systemic actions that bring mistreatment to anyone on the basis of their race or ethnicity. We understand race to include characteristics such as skin color, whereas ethnicity also encompasses cultural factors such as nationality, tribal affiliation, religion, language and traditions of a particular group. We recognize and value the unique contributions each brings to the beautiful diversity within humanity.

We are all made in God's image

We believe every person is an image bearer of God. Human dignity comes from who each of us was created to be (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, human dignity and uniqueness from the rest of creation isn't based on gender, race or ethnicity. Nor is it based on our talents, personality, our intellect, or even our performance or contribution to society.

Human dignity, equality and unity reflect the heart of our Creator and therefore should not be based on political ideologies. These are clear biblical mandates in how we are to love and respect one another. We are of value because we carry the image of God. That's who we are. We have the ability and responsibility to see the image of God in ourselves and in everyone around us.

Therefore, we stand for treating all people with the same value and respect, and condemn the sin of racism in all its forms.

Racism is sin

Since the fall of humanity (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12, Genesis 9:6), relational disunity and selfish pride have been significant problems. Not only did sin separate us from God, it separates us from one another.

Racism is the elevation of one race above another. It robs people of their dignity and worth as image bearers. We stand in opposition to the sins of prejudice, bigotry, racism and ethnocentrism in all its forms, whether in thought, word or deed. Therefore, these sins stand in opposition to God's love and the value He has assigned for all (Romans 2:11). Jesus' hope to the world, the Gospel, brings loving, eternal hope for all nations, all people and all ethnicities (Matt 28:18-20; Galatians 2:11-21).

God's call to love and reconciliation
Jesus is calling together a multi-ethnic people who will be together for all eternity (Rev 7:9; Galatians 3:28). God's heart is to unify people from every nation, every tribe, every language…forever.

Jesus desires all who know Him to live in unity and be ambassadors of reconciliation to God (ultimately) and with one another (John 17:20,21; John 10:16; 2 Cor 5:15-21; Gal 3:28; 1 Peter 2 & 3).

Furthermore, Jesus sums up the Law and the Prophets by saying we are to love God and love others (Matt 22:37-40). The apostle Paul says that without treating people with love we will be ineffective as followers of Jesus in all we say, know, believe or give (1 Cor 13:1-3). Love is a self-sacrificing action on behalf of another. This love is not extended only to people like ourselves, but extends even to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). We cannot love others and be involved in racism. Nor can we claim to be mature followers of Jesus and not love others (John 13:35; 1 John 4:7-8).

Racism is not only a modern issue (Romans 5:12). Injustice due to race or ethnicity shows up as an issue within the early church and was confronted and corrected to align with God's heart for all people (Eph 2:14; Acts 6:1-6; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-42). The apostle Paul teaches that the cross of Christ has taken away the 'enmity' and the 'wall of separation' between the Jew and Gentile as well as all people groups.

In Acts 6, we find an example of a majority group demonstrating both the need and wisdom of listening to the minority. When there was an issue of injustice, the majority chose to listen to the minority group and act to reconcile the injustice. We are committed to listening and becoming aware of the unjust burdens others are carrying, and we commit to carry them as well (Galatians 6:2). We will listen, learn and lament (or rejoice) with those whose life experiences are different than our own.

We commit to welcome in and raise up followers of Jesus and ministry leaders from every race and ethnicity within our church and community.

God Subverts traditional views of Power
We believe God expects us to pay not equal, but special attention to anyone who is being mistreated or marginalized (Proverbs 31:8-9). Therefore, we need to look for opportunities to use whatever power and means we have to help those who have less and are being mistreated, marginalized or overlooked because of it (Isaiah 58:2, 6-7).

We believe neither God nor His Word says that power and authority are intrinsically evil. In fact, they are necessary in any society (Rom 13:1,3-4). However, power and authority are to be used in sacrificial service for the benefit of others, just as God has done for us (Philippians 2:5-11). So racial reconciliation isn't about flipping power between groups, but it is about using what power and influence one possesses for the benefit of those who have less.

We recognize that the ultimate power struggle is not people against people, but sinful, weak people against an all-powerful holy God (Genesis 3; 1 John 3:4-10). This is the fundamental root of all human suffering.

Both Corporate & Individual Responsibility
God expects us to move both individually and corporately to oppose racism and bring racial reconciliation. We are all products of our community and our community is, to some degree, a product of us (2 Samuel 21; Joshua 7; Numbers 16; 1 Samuel 15:2; Deut 23:3-8). When power and wealth are used selfishly and with prejudice, it creates mistreatment and oppression for those without either. Daniel confessed this type of sin to God, even when there was no evidence he personally participated in such behavior (Daniel 9:5-7; Ezra 9:5-6, Is 6:5-7). God depicts the human world as a profoundly inter-related community, the godly must live with a sense of responsibility for their community as well as its structure and systems.

Therefore, like Daniel, we recognize, confess, and condemn the corporate and historical sins of the Christian church and our nation when it has not confronted the racial sins of slavery, racism and bigotry. We grieve the long history of racial injustice in our nation. We lament over these sins carried out against our fellow image bearers. We, the people of God, commit to walk in a manner worthy of God's calling on us and to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to bring about and preserve unity and peace (Eph 4:1-3). We will speak out against injustice (whether individual or systemic) and proclaim truth and act with love toward all.

Each of us has a responsibility before God to align our thinking, loving and living with Him no matter what our group, culture or nation is believing and doing. Every individual follower of Jesus is empowered and expected by God to live differently than the sinful behavior within their culture, group, people or nation (Genesis 6:9-22; 18:16-33).

Our behavior is to be governed by the timeless truth of God's word and not by the social norms of the culture in which we live (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20, John 14:6, Psalm 119:160). Moreover, the identity of every follower of Christ is in their belonging to Jesus and being a child of the King. Our identities are not found in our race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or in our performance (Gal 2:20; 3:26-29).

We believe that our ultimate hope of racial reconciliation is found in the source of all peace, reconciliation and fellowship, that is, Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18; John 1:12; Eph 2:14-15; 1 John 4:7-11).

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK

Prayers for the sick will be done as we have seen in scripture and in accordance with our doctrinal statement, where we pray in faith "expecting the answer yes but accepting the answer no." God's miraculous healing will be confirmed by visual observance, personal testimony, and medical reports, and not simply by the verbal declarations of those praying.

The Elders of Rolling Hills are ready to be called upon to anoint with oil and pray for the sick. "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the Elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14). Oil was a common medical remedy of the day. The application for today is to do everything you can medically, and do everything spiritually, recognizing Yahweh Rophe does the healing.

IMPORTANT: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The gifts of Healings, Prophesies, and Tongues, are among the gifts that appear less predominant today. According to the teaching of the apostle Paul, these are less important than the overall gift of love for each other and for Christ, which unites us all. Because these gifts are also among the easiest to abuse, Paul gave much instruction on how they were to be exercised. Together, with Paul's instruction (alongside the patterns in the rest of scripture), and to best preserve the unity of the Spirit and the building up of the body of Christ at RHCC, these gifts are to be exercised within the following parameters:

THE DOCTRINE OF TONGUES

Tongues in the New Testament are known dialects which are spoken under the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). They are unlearned and incomprehensible to the one speaking, but to those hearing, the language is understandable (Acts 2:5-13). The Tongues of Acts 2 are the same as the Tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. If one speaks in Tongues he is to pray for the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13).

The gift of Tongues was used in the early church as a sign for unbelievers, especially unbelieving Jews (Acts 2:7-8 and 1 Corinthians 14:22). Whenever the sign is used, the unbeliever hears and recognizes that God is present. Tongues, defined as a super naturally spoken unlearned dialect, still happens today, but in the vast majority of cases this gift is not needed. It is the exception rather than the rule, because in congregations where everyone speaks the same language, the Tongue is not necessary.

Romans 8:26 has been used by many to support the concept of a prayer language spoken in Tongues. However, in this passage Paul is talking of groanings that cannot be uttered. He is not talking about a language. The Spirit intercedes on behalf of the believer to express the heart of God. There are times when we do not know how to pray because we have a burden, confusion, or longing about a person or situation. At those times the Holy Spirit may groan through us as we yield completely to Him.

The concept of Tongues of Angels in 1 Corinthians 13:1 is often used to explain what many people are doing when they speak unintelligible utterances. However, the reference is simply saying that even if it were angels speaking, no amount of talk would substitute for love. Every time an angel appeared and spoke in the Bible, that angel spoke in the language of the people listening (Genesis 18:1-5, 19:11-23; Luke 2:8-12; Hebrews 13:2). No other reference corroborates that angels speak some unique language; no reference indicates that there is an "angelic language" we might knowingly or unknowingly speak.

What experience are people having today if they are not speaking in some known language or in some "Tongue of Angels"? Sometimes in this sophisticated society people expect that everything ought to be understandable. The current expressions of "Tongues" may be seen as a reaction to cut and dried academic approaches. There are legitimate occasions for putting the mind to rest and expressing love and devotion to the Lord without worrying about what is said. This type of communication can be cleansing, motivating, emotionally fulfilling, and very spiritual, but it is not necessarily New Testament Tongues. It also needs to be said that these experiences can be counterfeited by Satan; the counterfeits can be seen in Eastern religions and the occult. Other gifts of the Spirit may be counterfeited as well.

If at any time during the gathering of the congregation of RHCC, including community groups, an individual begins to speak in tongues, an interpreter should immediately identify themselves and the known language they understand to be spoken. Since the scripture indicates tongues are a known language, if the interpreter cannot identify the language being spoken, the one speaking should be silent as the word of God instructs us in I Cor 14:28.

THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS

The Gifts of Healings as described in I Cor. 12:9 are plural and involve spiritual, physical and emotional aspects. All members in the body of Christ are expected to pray for one another to be healed in all aspects at any time. Those who feel they have a specific gift in this area should let it be known to the elders of RHCC (those to whom God has given oversight of the church) so that it may be confirmed through practice and observance, as it would be with any other gift exercised within the body.

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

We recognize this gift as different than the Old Testament "Office of Prophet," where those filled with the Holy Spirit spoke for God declaring, "thus says the Lord." These Prophets of God were seen as declaring the very will and words of God. Their words were absolute truth. Those who disobeyed the Prophet's words did so at great peril. If a Prophet of God ever spoke a false word they were to be considered a false prophet and put to death.

Those with the gift of Prophecy today speak by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but their words are not automatically elevated to the status and authority of the OT Prophets. I Thess. 5:20-21 tells us specifically that all prophecies are to be tested. The Word in the NT is used more in a secondary sense.

Used in a secondary sense of those who speak a specific message from God to the Christian community, usually in an itinerant manner. These gifted individuals are not proclaiming new truth that can be considered additional Biblical truth but are speaking God's truth from the Bible. Usually they address specific subjects that the Christian Church needs to hear. Acts 13:1-5, 13-16, 32-35, 21:7-10

Any individual feeling they have the gift of prophecy or the ability to speak certain words of knowledge should make it known to the elders of the church that their gift be tested and confirmed.

We recognize God gives individuals specific inspiration to exhort and encourage one another. This can be done at any time and should always be done with humility, encouraging the listener to test the prophecy with his or her own prayers.

Any individual claiming to have a word from the Lord, speaking with God's unquestioned authority, who gives instructions or advice that proves false or causes harm, is in danger of being declared a false prophet and is subject to church discipline.

ANGELS

We believe that angels are “ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). Angels have at times appeared to men, unrecognized as angels (Judges 13:16). Their appearance can also be with great and frightening glory, as the Christmas story attests. Throughout Christ’s earthly ministry angels were sent to minister to Him. They were there, for example, at His birth, His baptism, His temptation, and the crucifixion. It would seem that angels may accompany the righteous at the time of their death (Matthew 24:31, Luke 16:22). During the course of the believer’s life angels can be expected to “encamp around those who fear the Lord, and rescue them” (Psalms 34:7).

Demons are angels who chose to assert their own power and will above that of God, and so were cast down from their places in heaven. Chief of these is Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12). He is depicted as one who makes war on the saints, tries to undo God’s work (Mark 4:15), instigates evil (John 13:2, 27), gains the worship of men (Luke 4:6-8), deceives (Revelation 12:9), disguises (2 Corinthians 11:14), instigates doubt (Genesis 3:1), misuses Scripture (Matthew 4:6), and accuses Christians before God (Revelation 12:10). He is called prince of the power of this air (Ephesians 2:2) and ruler of this world (John 14:30). By His life and death and resurrection, Christ has triumphed over Satan as God said He would (Genesis 3:15, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 10:17-19). Ultimately Satan will be subdued forever. The believer need not be overcome by Satan. We are told to resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7). We overcome the devil as God’s word abides in us (1 John 2:14). Ephesians 6:11-16 describes more precisely the way in which Satan is to be overcome.

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

There is a spectrum of views among Bible-believing people regarding the role of women and men in ministry and church leadership. On one end of this spectrum is a perspective commonly called “egalitarian.” This viewpoint believes that women and men may hold any position in the church, including lead pastor and elder. On the other end is a viewpoint commonly called “complementarian.” Those with this viewpoint believe that men and women are of equal worth, but roles in the church for each are different, with primary leadership and teaching responsibilities reserved for men. In between these ends of the spectrum are myriad variations or modifications to both viewpoints. These various viewpoints can be supported by reasonable and biblical lines of reasoning, many of which we can both understand and respect.

Given the controversial nature of this topic, it is important to note that the team of elders at Rolling Hills Community Church considers the Scriptures to be the inerrant word of God. We do not believe that cultural relevancy dictates the truth of God. Furthermore, we believe the word of God is best understood in its literal, historical, grammatical context. Thus, the historical context in which the New Testament letters were written can have a bearing on their meaning.

Finally, we believe that Scripture should interpret Scripture. That is, when we have a difficult or unclear passage we depend on the whole of Scripture to help us understand it. We do not believe Scripture contradicts itself. So, if there is an apparent contradiction we look to the rest of Scripture in its literal, historical, grammatical context to help us understand.

Having spent over a year of praying and studying the Scriptures as well as credible scholars with different perspectives, the consensus of the Rolling Hills Community Church elders is best described as **Soft Complementarianism**." Which is to say:

At RHCC we believe every person is made in God's image, and there is equality in God's love and the outpouring of His Spirit to all women and men who are counted as His children through the grace and mercy granted us in Jesus. Further, we believe God grants gifts in His measure to all of His followers, and that women and men share in this giftedness for His glory. Some women and men are gifted in teaching and we endorse the use of this gift broadly and wisely. We also believe qualified women and men may exercise leadership in a number of other ways including, but not limited to, mixed community groups, teaching adult classes, leading worship and communion, officiating weddings, and baptizing new believers. Teaching, or any gift used by women or men for the building up of the body of Christ, will always be exercised in full submission to the authority of our elder team.

The only position we believe Scripture reserves for men is that of an elder. We believe the responsibility for the overall direction of the church rests upon the shoulders of men who are appointed to the elder team. We believe, however, the overall direction for the church can only be determined through a spirit of prayer and total dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ as well as frequent dialogue and input from both women and men throughout the church.

Believing that the list of gifts in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 are not gender specific, the title of Pastor may be given to qualified men or women who are employed on staff to function in that capacity. The primary teaching responsibility at RHCC will fall to the lead pastor, who is an elder. Non-elders may be asked to teach from time to time under the full authority of the elder team.

Our intent is to be a church where men and women love, respect, and value each other. Through meaningful dialogue and decision-making, we encourage each person to use their God-given gifts, talents, and experience for the sake of the church and the Kingdom of God. We understand that the family of RHCC has a variety of church backgrounds and convictions and have a wide range of views on this matter, which we respect. Despite the diversity of opinions on this important issue we do not believe that this is a core doctrinal issue that should divide the church. The Bible very clearly teaches that we are to have unity in the midst of diversity on non-core doctrinal issues.

A Summary of Key Scriptures And What We Believe

First and foremost, we believe male and female believers in Jesus Christ are equal in stature before God the Father, and through our redemption in Jesus Christ we all are one. We believe that God, throughout Scripture as well as today, uses both women and men in very significant roles, and that God gifts both men and women for the equipping of His church. And, as mentioned earlier, we believe the lists of gifts in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 are not gender specific and thus can apply to men or women. Therefore we encourage women to pursue and exercise their gifts and to fill every other leadership role to which they are qualified and called.

Although The Scripture is clear that women functioned as disciples (Luke 10:38-39), teachers (Acts 18:24-28), deacons (Romans 16:1-2), and prophets (Acts 21: 8-9), there is no clear reference to a woman ever holding the office of an elder. We believe the tenor of Scripture,

including Paul's reference to the principle of headship, (1 Corinthians 11: 3ff and Ephesians 5:22ff) as well as God's pattern of leadership (Old Testament priests, the Apostles, and qualification of elders in I Tim. 3), seems to indicate the role of elder and lead pastor (who is assumed to be an elder in our context) are the responsibility of spiritually qualified men.

Much of the controversy over women teaching in the church comes from 1 Corinthians 14: 32-35 where Paul writes that women should remain silent in the churches, they are not allowed to speak but must be in submission. Paul also says in I Timothy 2:11-12 that "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission" and "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

A wider study of the context sheds much light on these difficult passages. When you look at the context of both I Corinthians and I Timothy, Paul is dealing with proper order and authority during the worship services. He states in I Cor. 14: 33 "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace-as in all the congregations of the Lord's people." Vs 40 "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." Many theologians agree that in both churches there were problems with some of the women asking questions and exercising their gifts in a manner that disrupted the worship services and challenged the men in authority, which prompted Paul to address the matter. He was not prohibiting the use of their spiritual gifts; he was prescribing the proper way to exercise them, i.e. in full submission to the elders.

In I Cor. 11:3-16 Paul just gave instruction on how women should pray and prophesy in church. Since women can't literally be silent and pray and prophesy at the same time, "silent" must mean something other than literally not speaking in the worship services. If women were allowed to pray and prophesy in the worship services they must not be violating whatever Paul meant by being silent and learning in quiet submissiveness. Evidently they are not mutually exclusive. They can do both at the same time.

In the New Testament churches, Jesus Christ was head of the church working through male elders as the final decision makers. This is true of our church as well. However we also believe the Bible teaches that the gifts the Holy Spirit distributes to the church, to build up the body and equip his people for works of service, are not gender specific. (I Cor. 12: 4-6, 28-31. Ephesians 4:11-13) Therefore anyone male or female with the gift of teaching may exercise that gift as long as it's in full submission to the authority of our elder team.

We understand that there may be times when gender does matter in a particular role, not because it is required or prohibited by Scripture, but simply because it is prudent. For example, it could be wiser to have a man leading a men's accountability group or for a woman to be leading a women's recovery group. So we want to exercise both freedom and discernment in these matters.

The above discussion is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the topic but simply a summary of our position. For more detailed information of the egalitarian and complementarian positions and other relevant Scriptures, contact the church office and one of our elders would be more than happy to discuss the topic in greater detail.

UNIVERSAL CHURCH, LOCAL CHURCH, AND ISRAEL

The Universal Church is manifested in local assemblies of Jesus followers. These local churches are to use their spiritual gifts under the governing authority of the Elders to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and live out the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40). The church and Israel are distinct from one another, each having their own distinguishable futures (Rom 2:28-29, 9-11; Eph 3:1-12; Acts 1:6-8).

END TIMES EVENTS AND TIMING*

Jesus will first come to receive His own to Himself (rapture), and later after a period of tribulation will come (second coming) to set up His earthly Kingdom and to reign one thousand years over redeemed Israel and all the nations of the world. (Matthew 1:18-20, Luke 24, John 1:1-14, Romans 5:6-11, Hebrews 8,1 John 2:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:4-6)

Following this thousand year Messianic reign, Satan and all those who have rejected Christ will be judged once and for all at the Great White Throne judgment, and then be eternally separated from God in Hell (Rev 20:1-3, 7-15; Is 11:1-6; 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-8; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 Tim 4:18)

Christ will then hand over the kingdom to the Father, having completed His redemptive work. The old heavens and earth will be destroyed and God will establish a new heaven and earth for His followers to dwell with Him forever. (1 Cor 15:24-28; Rev 21; 22:5, 11; 2 Thes 1:9)

** While the Bible gives sufficient data to verify the inevitable reality of these end time events, Christians of good faith differ in opinion on their specific timing and sequence.*