

Doctrinal Position Statements

Contents

The Holy Scriptures	1
God	
God The Father	1
God The Son	2
God The Holy Spirit	3
Spiritual Gifts	3
Man	5
Salvation	5
The Church	6
Eschatology	8
Women in the Church	8
Priesthood	9
Ordinances - Baptism & Communion	9
Prayer	10
Divorce	10

The Holy Scriptures

The Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible and God-breathed, entirely trustworthy; and is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct; (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

The Scriptures are to be used in the interpretation of Scripture with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:15-17; John 7:37-39; John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

God

There is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

GOD THE FATHER. God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

GOD THE SON. Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

The incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics



of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

The Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

In the incarnation, the second Person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

The Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

On the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

Our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that

God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- **Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)**
- **Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)**
- **Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)**

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Saviour (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).



It is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

The work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration. The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2 Peter 1:19-21). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

Spiritual Gifts

THE HOLY SPIRIT administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today, and that

speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

Man

MAN was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

Because of Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost.

Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

Because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Salvation

SALVATION is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

REGENERATION. Regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

ELECTION. Election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

Sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Saviour and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

The unmerited favour that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part or to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

Election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

JUSTIFICATION. Justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ

(Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

SANCTIFICATION. Every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

There is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

SECURITY. All the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

SEPARATION. Separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Saviour. Separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11). Believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

The Church

All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

The formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

The establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1)



and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called overseers, bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

These leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

The importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We believe in the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). It is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

All saints are called to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12). The church cooperates with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

There were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).

No one possesses the gift of healing today, but God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

Eschatology

Recognizing the diversity of opinion that exists in Christendom concerning end time events, we take the pretribulation, premillennial view. Christ will come to the air to receive to Himself all His people, both those who have died and those still alive on earth) (1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor.15:51-52; Tit.2:11-14). This will be followed by the Tribulation on earth while the church is in heaven with Christ experiencing apportionment of rewards (the Judgment Seat of Christ) (2 Cor.5:10; Rom.14:10). The Tribulation is the fulfilment of Israel's seventieth week (Dan.9: 24–27; Rev.6:1 – 19-21) with the latter half being 'time of Jacob's trouble (Jer.30:7) or the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21). The Tribulation brings to a close the times of the Gentiles.

The second Coming of Christ to the earth (or the Second Advent) terminates the Great Tribulation, ushering in the Millennial Age during which Satan is bound and placed in the abyss. The surviving, faithful remnant of Israel will be restored to her own land and will realize God's covenant promises under the universal, righteous rule and reign of Christ. (Deut. 30: 1-10; Psa. 98:9; Isa. 11:9; 51:1-16; Ezek. 37:21-28; Matt. 24:15 – 25, 46; Acts 15:16-17; Rom. 8:19-23, 11:25-27; Rev. 20:1-3).

At the close of the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment occurs for all unbelievers whose spirits and souls have been kept in conscious awareness of the impending final judgment. They will be cast into the 'lake of fire' along with Satan and his angels as the punishment of everlasting destruction. Believers, on the other hand, are ushered into the presence of the Lord at death, remaining in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body which occurs when Christ returns for His own. Their souls and glorified bodies will be reunited and will be with Christ forever in glory. Until the 'day of the Lord' occurs after which 'a new heaven and new earth the home of righteousness', emerges, the Lord patiently waits for everyone to come

to repentance, not wanting anyone to perish. (Luke 16:19-26,23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3: 7-13; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

In taking this eschatological view, we believe it is important for young believers to have a framework on which to hang the various end-time components. In the final analysis (at the Rapture), it is possible that another eschatological position may better explain the sequence and relationship of the component events. However, no one can be dogmatic about a particular position but we should all be convinced about the truth of the components and what is taught at Mueller Community Church should be consistent with the above statements.

Women's Ministry

It is clear that gender is irrelevant in the Kingdom with respect to salvation, spiritual gifts and future glory (Gal. 3:28-29) since we are all one in Christ Jesus. However, there is a divine order set out in Paul's teaching, placing the male over the female with respect to authority and honour, as Christ is over the church (1 Cor.11:3,8; 1 Tim. 2:12-14; Eph. 5:22-24). This pertains to marriage and public worship despite the secular trends of our society. It is clear that a fuller study of this issue shows that mutual submission to one another is also mandated and that husbands have no right to lord it over their wives but rather should conduct themselves as 'loving managers' of their homes.

Whereas women have broad scope for ministry in general, it appears that in the local church, they should not be functioning as elders (overseers, leaders) or teachers of the church at large. However, this does not preclude women from being involved in many aspects of ministry and at Mueller Community Church we greatly value the important part that women play in the Christian church worldwide (including missions).

Priesthood

All Christians are believer-priests and the whole body of believers is a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), reflecting the holiness of God and that of our Great High Priest, Christ (Heb. 7:26). We offer spiritual sacrifices to God, intercede for man before God (enjoying access to God through our Great High Priest) and represent God before man (Heb. 10:19-22; 13:15-16; Rev. 1:4-6). Our 'sacrifices' include our bodies (Rom. 12:1-2), money or material goods (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16), words that yield praise to God and actions that glorify God and honour His name like sweet ascending incense (Heb. 13:15-16).

There are therefore no distinctions of clergy and laity as each believer-priest is endowed with the above privileges and responsibilities. It can be seen that personal living is more important than public ministry with regard to the outworking of the priestly office.

Ordinances

Baptism and celebration of the Lord's Supper are the two ordinances (or authoritative order) given by Christ to His followers (Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19). They are clearly relevant only for believers and in compliance with them; believers indicate 'oneness' with the body of Christ, the church, and their obedience to Christ.

Water baptism is the outward symbol of Spirit baptism, when the Holy Spirit, at the point of conversion, places a believer within the body of Christ (1 Cor.12:13). Though it does not confer forgiveness of sin or reception of the Spirit, water baptism expresses outwardly and visibly the confession of faith the believer has in Christ. Furthermore, baptism is a symbol of Christ's death, burial and resurrection and the believer, through baptism, identifies himself with Christ in these experiences (Rom. 6:3-5). The meaning of baptism being a 'pledge of a good conscience toward God' (1 Pet. 3:21), is that the believer commits, in good conscience, to make sure that what baptism symbolizes

will become a reality in his life. It is by immersion into water and should be performed as soon after conversion as practicable.

The Lord's Supper (1 Cor.11:20) has an historical similarity in the Jewish Passover when the death of a spotless lamb bringing deliverance and new life to the Israelites was celebrated (Exod. 12; 1 Cor. 5:7). In breaking bread and drinking wine, the believer remembers through these symbols the death, burial and resurrection of Christ for him personally (Luke 22:19). The Lord's Supper also represents communion (or common sharing), unity (1 Cor. 10: 16-17), thanksgiving (Eucharist), covenant-sign, and proclamation of Christ's great work and an anticipation of His coming again (Luke 22:16; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

We celebrate it on Resurrection Day or the Lord's Day, Sunday, as the early church appeared to do (Acts 20:7) though immediately following Pentecost, it was celebrated daily (Acts 2:46). There is obviously considerable liberty in its celebration with respect to its location, context and frequency (1 Cor. 11:26, 33; Acts 2:46; Matt. 18:20). Before participation, it is important to examine oneself, putting things right with God and with others first (1 Cor. 11:28-32; Matt. 5:23-24). This is to encourage both holy living and participation in the Supper, not a discouragement to participate (1 Cor. 11:28).

Prayer

Prayer is the communion of the soul with God by conversation (verbal or non-verbal). It is also a 'means of grace' whereby the keeping of such an ordinance yields God's covenanted blessings to us.

The Holy Spirit facilitates our praying by interceding for us and presenting our desires, petitions and aspirations in a special way to the Father. (Rom. 8:26-27). Prayer in the Christian's life was superbly modelled by our Lord



Jesus Christ Himself where it was His daily practice to commune with the Father and often all night (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 11:1). He gave encouragement to His disciples to 'ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you' (Matt. 7:7). Jesus also gave a model prayer for His disciples (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4).

Some of the components of prayer include confession (Psa. 66:18; 139:23; Prov. 28:13), adoration (Psa. 100:4; Luke 1:46), thanksgiving (Psa. 95:2; Luke 17:17; 1 Thess. 5:18), intercession (Matt. 9:37-38) and supplication (or petition) (Matt. 6:11; 10:29-31; Phil. 4:6-7). Prayer is to be offered in a humble spirit, in the will of God, with a pure heart, in faith, fervently, perseveringly and in Jesus' name (Isa. 57:15; 1 John 5:14-15; Matt. 5:8; James 5:15-18; Heb. 11:6; Luke 18: 1-8; John 14:13-14). God may answer prayer directly, in a delayed way or in a different way. It is God's sovereign prerogative as He determines all things to conform to His divine will, purpose and glory.

It is vital for each Christian to establish a regular, daily, personal prayer time with God, remembering that God wants us to walk and talk with Him all the time, audibly and inaudibly, as our circumstances allow (1 Thess. 5:17). To have a prayer partner such as a friend or spouse is an excellent way to facilitate prayer and a certain blessing attends (Matt. 18:19).

Corporate prayer (structured in the church program, formally and informally, small or large groups) is also necessary and vital for the church's prosperity (Acts 4:31; 12:12).

Divorce

Relevant scriptures to this topic include Matt. 19:1-2; Mark 10:1-12; Gen. 1:27; 2:24; Deut: 1- 4; 1 Cor. 7:12-16. It is clear that God's original design for marriage is life-long, regardless of any and all extenuating circumstances. God's will is also that a Christian marry another

Christian (1 Cor. 6:14-18). In the old Jewish economy under Mosaic Law, divorce was permitted because of 'hardness of peoples' hearts'. Jesus set the record straight again in his teaching where he emphasized that 'what God has joined together, let man not separate'. Two possible grounds for divorce include marital unfaithfulness and an unbelieving spouse who chooses to leave the marriage.