Membership Covenant

Having been brought by God's sovereign grace to repent and believe in the good news of Jesus Christ and his saving work, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, we do now, relying on His grace, solemnly and joyfully affirm our covenant with each other.

We will pray and labor to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, devoted to the glory of God, resting in the gospel of his Son, and dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. To that end,

We will not forsake assembling together, but will faithfully attend our corporate worship, treasuring our church's weekly opportunity to sing, pray, and receive the whole counsel of God's Word. We will defend and maintain a gospel-centered ministry by upholding and attending to biblical preaching, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a local church: we will pray for and serve one another, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other, and reject all opportunities to speak or hear gossip or slander. We will instead seek to encourage one another and build each other up in the faith.

We will rejoice with those who rejoice and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek to proclaim and adorn the gospel of Christ before our family, friends, and neighbors and faithfully transfer the gospel to future generations.

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of our local church, to the care of our members, and to the spread of the gospel locally and to all nations.

We will, if we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the teaching of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Sovereign
Grace Church

Appendix B:
Statement on Church Discipline

Throughout its pages, the Bible sounds a recurring theme: those God loves, He disciplines.[1] Discipline is a sometimes challenging process of God correcting His people's thoughts, words and behavior so they can fulfill their calling to become like Him. God disciplines His people through a variety of means. He calls His people first to self-discipline. Each Christian is called to hear the Word of God as they read the Bible and hear the Bible taught and applied.[2] As they compare their life to God's Word, they adjusts themselves to conform to their Savior. But individual interaction with God through His Word is not the only means that God uses to make His children holy. God also uses His people. "Brothers," writes Paul, "if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness…."[3] As members of Sovereign Grace Church we take seriously our responsibility to "restore" members who fail to allow God to discipline them personally for their sins. This means that beginning with private confrontation and, if necessary, leading to public rebuke, we seek to help one another overcome any refusal to repent of those words and actions that the Bible clearly defines as sin.[4] This includes not only sinful words and behavior, but also refusal to turn from heretical doctrine.

Jesus outlined a process for addressing another believer's sin in Matthew 18:15-17.[5] As a church we agree that this is the way for us to approach someone who refuses to appropriate God's grace for change. Initially, church discipline should be informal: if a Christian sees sin in a brother or sister that appears to be continual, he should approach that person and inquire about it. If in fact there is unrepentant sin and a refusal to repent, then the concerned brother or sister should involve one or two others, which may include a pastor. If this group confirms that, in fact, sin continues without repentance, the process must move to formal church discipline.

When the church begins to formally discipline a member, the church's pastors inquire with the individual member in question to confirm fact and to appeal for change. If change is not forthcoming, the pastors will inform the church of the member and their sin, urging members to contact the erring member and appeal for repentance. During this time, the member under discipline may not participate in the Lord's supper or attend meetings for the purpose of fellowship. Instead, their participation with members should revolve around their need for change. If, after a reasonable period of appeal, no repentance is forthcoming, the pastors will inform the church again, this time announcing that they must revoke membership and that the church must now treat the unrepentant person as they treat unbelievers: in other words, when they interact with this person they should not have "fellowship" as the Bible defines it, but they should appeal for the former member to put their faith in Jesus' work on the cross for them and turn from their sin.

Church discipline has nothing to do with "shunning" a person. It involves first confronting in love and gentleness and, if unsuccessful, withholding fellowship. It is not rejection of a relationship but a change in the nature of a relationship. If a person under discipline is not factious, disruptive or a harmful influence, they are welcome to attend all church meetings that are open to unbelievers with the exception of small groups that meet for the purpose of fellowship. The pastors may decide to abbreviate or eliminate the process of appeal for repentance if the sin is especially notorious, or if the member proves to be factious, disruptive, or leading others into sin or error. In these cases, the pastors may ask church members to avoid all contact with an individual in order to mitigate their sinful influence.

At times a member may seek to withdraw from the church to avoid church discipline and its consequences. Just as a good shepherd will go after a sheep that has wandered from the flock (Matt. 18:12-14; Ezek. 34:4,8,16), so shall the pastors and members of this church seek to restore a wandering member to the Lord through biblical discipline. Therefore, discipline may be instituted or continued either before or after a member seeks to withdraw from membership if the Board of Governing Pastors determines that such discipline may serve to guard and preserve the honor of God, protect the purity of the church, or restore the wandering member to the Lord.

While the church cannot force a withdrawing member to remain in this congregation, the church has the right and the responsibility to encourage restoration, to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make a final determination as to the person's membership status at the time withdrawal is sought or acknowledged. In doing so, the Board of Governing Pastors, at its discretion, may temporarily suspend further disciplinary proceedings, dismiss any or all charges pending against the accused, or proceed with discipline and pronounce an appropriate censure.

If a member leaves the church while they are under the scrutiny of the disciplinary process or while a censure against them is still in effect, and if the Board of Governing pastors learns that they are attending another church, the Board may inform that church that the person is currently under church discipline and may ask that church to encourage the accused to repent of his sin and to be restored to the Lord and to any people whom he has offended. Such communications enhance the possibility that a person may finally repent of their sin, and, at the same time, serve to warn the other church to be on guard against the harm that the accused might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-14; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:16-18; 4:9, 14-15; 3 John 9-10).

Once the pastors make a sin publicly known, they commit as well to inform the church of repentance and restoration to fellowship as appropriate to the situation and the good of the church.

Christians who attend Sovereign Grace Church and have been excluded from fellowship from another church will not be allowed to participate in fellowship at Sovereign Grace Church unless they repent of their sins and make confession and restitution with their former church or the pastors of Sovereign Grace Church are able to determine that the former church did not apply church discipline according to Scripture.

_____	_____	_____
Print Name	*Signature*	*Date*
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Print Name	*Signature*	*Date*
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Pastor	*Date*	

[1]And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives". (Hebrews 12:5-6 ESV, see also verses 7-13)
[2]See John 15:3, 10, 20; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:11-13
[3]Galatians 6:1 ESV
[4]Other New Testament passages (besides Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-17 ESV) that support this practice include: 1 Corinthians 5; Acts: 20:28ff; Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10-11; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.
[5]"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (ESV)

Appendix C:
Statement on Divorce and Remarriage
For Members of Sovereign Grace Church

In attending to the issues of divorce and remarriage, the pastors of Sovereign Grace Church have attempted to develop a position that reflects the teaching and proportionality of Scripture.

1. Marriage and the Gospel

   Because we are a gospel centered church, all doctrinal stances must be grounded in the good news that 'Christ died for our sins.' The gospel is particularly concerned with marriage as that mystery which represents the relationship between Christ and the church that he died to save. Any discussion of Biblical allowances for divorce (enumerated below) must be set in the context of Biblical teaching that divorce undermines this glorious intent for marriage—to proclaim the gospel to the world through the one-flesh, life-long relationship of a husband and wife. This being said, we must also remember that the sins of believers that lead to divorce are forgiven by the atoning blood of Christ.

2. Marriage and God's Glory

   As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. This all-of-life demeanor from created man to his Creator is the foundation stone for our teaching about marriage/divorce. Despite the overwhelming cultural accommodation to divorce, believers are called to live differently, not led by sin but for God's glory. Convenience and self-centeredness, often the prevailing world view in relation to divorce, can have no place in our consideration of how we live our lives. God's glory must be the goal of every decision we make in relation to our marriage and in the event of divorce and remarriage.

3. Marriage and God's Word

   God created marriage. Marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman, conceived in the mind of God and given as God's gift.

   "Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." Genesis 2:18-25

The marriage covenant is literally, physically binding. It is God's intention that this covenant would be permanent until the death of one spouse. Through the declaration and consummation of the marriage vows, God joins a man and a woman together. He literally knits the two into one. Therefore, Jesus says:

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are not longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." Mark 10:7-9

It is important to note what Jesus underscores in Mark 10:9. "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." Jesus illustrates the holiness of marriage by reiterating that it is the work of God's hands—that God joins two people into one. Marriage is not merely a contract between two people. Marriage is a creative act of God, intended to last as long as the man and wife are both still living. Jesus sternly reminds us that we, as creatures, would be foolish to vandalize or destroy what God has created.

4. The Origin of Divorce and God's Perspective on Divorce

Divorce was birthed out of man's hardness of heart—separating what God has joined.

"And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Mark 10:2-9

Divorce stems from the sinfulness of mankind. Specifically, divorce reveals our propensity to destroy even the best, most mysteriously beautiful gifts that God gives us. Given the sanctity of marriage and the nature of divorce, there is not a single instance recorded where God communicates any feeling other than hatred for divorce. All sin that leads to divorce, though certainly forgiven in the gospel, should be rejected as contrary to God's Word.

In addition to sin that leads to divorce, sin often follows divorce in cases of unbiblical remarriage. With two exceptions (enumerated below), the Bible categorizes remarriage after divorce as adultery—thus highlighting the seriousness of divorce in

God's mind. If God has made two people into one, how can they be separated again, and if they part ways and "join" elsewhere, what is that but adultery? Furthermore, Jesus' teaching categorically condemned the rampant divorce and remarriage the characterized the culture of the 1st century and continues today.

5. Is Divorce and Remarriage Ever Permissible?

Matthew and Paul specify two instances where divorce is permissible.

A. God allows for divorce in the case of adultery

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Matthew 5:31-32

"He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 9 And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." Matthew 19:8-9

It is important to see this exception as allowing for divorce but not making divorce inevitable. Adultery does not automatically lead to divorce. Forgiveness can overcome any sin—even the sin of adultery. Matthew is not commending divorce in these passages. He is simply saying that in such cases divorce is permissible.

For the innocent spouse, it is worth noting that as Christians in relationship with one another, we should look to the full counsel of God's word regarding such things as forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven us (Col. 3:13), forbearance, pursuing peace, and ultimately God's enacting redemption in the face of sin. However, adultery does undermine the sanctity of the marriage bond and the innocent spouse is allowed by God's Word to divorce and is then free to remarry a believer.

B. God allows for divorce in the case of an unbelieving spouse "leaving" or "abandoning" the marriage.

"But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace." 1 Corinthians 7:15

This passage does not allow for divorce in the case of "abandonment" by a spouse who claims to be a believer. However, in such a case, a period of confrontation of that spouse by the church would be initiated and would eventually lead to church discipline if the deserting spouse was unrepentant. If unrepentance continued indefinitely, the pastors would eventually identify that person as acting as an unbeliever (through church discipline) and the innocent spouse would be free to remarry.

6. Conclusions

- God loves marriage. God conceived the idea of marriage and actively creates each marriage bond. He even uses marriage to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the church. (Eph. 5)
- Marriage is intended to bring God glory—both as the Designer and the Sustainer of marriage.
- God provides grace to persevere and honor him during difficult moments and seasons in marriage. No marriage is free of conflict, but God is rich in grace and our aim should be to apprehend His grace in order to glorify Him through the marriage He has given us.
- God hates divorce. Insofar as divorce reflects the dissolution of a precious bond He created, God hates divorce. Therefore, divorce should be a sad affair to believers.
- In the instances where Scripture allows divorce, we should proceed with caution, taking care that any pursuit of divorce is done with God at the center of our thoughts, affections, and actions.
- Given the diagnosis of Scripture on divorce, we should always be suspicious of the hardness of our hearts—watching out for anger, self-righteousness, bitterness, unforgiveness, etc.—and not looking for biblical loop holes. The hope of the gospel reminds us that we have been the recipients of grace and now we can extend it to others freely.
- Remarriage is only permissible after a biblically permissible divorce.

Appendix D:
Statement on Counseling and Confidentiality

Though every reasonable effort shall be made to protect confidential communications, especially those received in a pastoral counseling context, there will be times when to fulfill properly their spiritual and leadership responsibilities, Sovereign Grace Church pastors or care group leaders may, as they deem necessary or appropriate, share confidential information with one another or Church members or others they deem may be part of the church member's problem or the solution to that problem. They may do this for the purpose of counsel, or for the purpose of protecting others from the damaging effects of someone's sin, or to assist one another in providing spiritual care to the people of the church.

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationship (see Romans 3:23; 7:7-25). Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God commands that he should seek assistance from other members, and especially from the pastors, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Romans 5:14; Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; Hebrews 10:24-25; 113:17; James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its members to make confession and to seek counsel from each other and especially from its pastoral counselors.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life. Therefore, our counseling shall be based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Neither the pastoral nor the biblical counselors[1] of this church are trained or licensed psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

Although some members of the church work in professional fields outside the church, when serving as pastoral or biblical counselors within the church, they do not provide the same kinds of professional advice and services that they do when they are hired in their professional capacities. Therefore members who have significant legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. Our pastoral and biblical counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisors and help members to consider their advice in light of relevant scriptural principles.

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Print Name	*Signature*	*Date*
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Print Name	*Signature*	*Date*
_____	_____	
Pastor	*Date*	

[1] Throughout this statement "biblical counselors" may include members of the church's Biblical Counseling Team (typically comprised of members who are not paid staff) as well as care group leaders.

Appendix E:
The 10 Affirmations of the Danvers Statement

The "Danvers Statement" summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. the widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Purposes:

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby
   - to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,
   - to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,
   - and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
   - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
   - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
   - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
   - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

Appendix F:
Statement on Leaving the Church

God will sometimes call someone to leave a Church and be joined to another local Church. This is an opportunity to walk carefully, soberly and by faith, especially if you are working through differences. Since the New Testament puts a high priority on maintaining the unity of the Church, it is crucial that this truth be primary in your process of leaving the Church. We believe that the application of the truth found in Ephesians 4:1-3 should be lived out in the following manner for the unity of the Church and the glory of God.

> *"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:1-3*

Before you decide to leave:

1. Pray
2. Let your current pastor know about your thinking before you move to another church or make your decision to relocate to another city. Ask for his counsel.
3. Weigh your motives. Is your desire to leave because of sinful, personal conflict or disappointment? If it's because of doctrinal reasons, are these doctrinal issues significant?
4. Do everything within you power to reconcile any broken relationships.
5. Be sure to consider all the "evidences of grace" you've seen in the church's life—places where God's work is evident. If you cannot see any evidences of God's grace, you might want to examine your own heart once more. (Matthew 7:3-5)
6. Be humble. Recognize you don't have all the facts and assess people and circumstances charitably (give them the benefit of the doubt).

If you go:

1. Don't divide the body.
2. Take the utmost care not to sow discontent even among your closest friends. Remember, you don't want anything to hinder their growth in grace in this church. Deny any desire to gossip (sometimes referred to as "venting" or "saying how you feel").
3. Pray for and bless the congregation and its leadership. Look for ways of doing this practically.
4. If there has been hurt, then forgive—even as you have been forgiven.

Adapted from "What is a Healthy Church?" by Mark Dever.