



## Philosophy of Ministry (Ver. 1, Jan. 23, 2022)

*Our desire at Missio Dei Church (MDC) is to be both thoughtful and biblical in all that we believe, teach, and practice. Below are the core convictions that guide and shape our teaching and practice as a church. Members and visitors of MDC can expect the elders and other church leaders to instruct and lead the church in accordance with the following convictions.*

### [1] Beliefs, Creeds, and Confessions

Foundational to all that we believe, confess, and practice as a Christian church is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We humbly but resolutely stand in line with historic Christianity, highly valuing the great creeds of the faith (including the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedonian Definition).

We have therefore identified and affirmed nine essential Christian beliefs in the "MDC Core Beliefs," which all MDC covenant members must affirm to remain as a member in good standing with the church:

1. There is one triune God, existing as Father, Son, and Spirit.
2. The Bible is God's inerrant Word.
3. All people are created in God's image.
4. All people are in need of redemption from sin.
5. Jesus is both Lord and Christ.
6. Jesus is the only way of salvation.
7. Salvation is by faith alone through grace alone.
8. The Church is Christ's body of which He is the head.
9. Jesus Christ will return.

These core beliefs do not exhaust the extent of our faith. Concerning secondary and tertiary beliefs and practices, pastors and church leaders will teach and lead the church in accordance with this "Philosophy of Ministry" document.

On other matters, the Elder Council, under the authority of the Scriptures, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with earnest prayer, and the cooperation of the congregation, will lead the church to walk in faithfulness to Christ—in belief, in witness, and in practice. We commit, therefore, to be scripturally faithful and charitably diverse in non-essential beliefs and teachings.

**Scriptures:** Gen 1:2, 26; Deut 6:4; Isa 6:8; 42:8; 63:10-11; Matt 1:21; 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-4, 14; 3:3; 5:24; 6:29, 44; 14:3; 17:3; Acts 1:5-8, 11; 2:1-4, 42-47; 14:23,27; 17:31; 20:28, 32; Rom 3:23-26; 5:10; 8:9-11, 23; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 15:4-5; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:16-25; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil 1:29; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet 1:3-16; 2:24; 1 John 4:8-11, 19; Rev 19:7-8; 20:15; 21:1-22:5

### [2] Worship

We believe worship is a way of life. Worship is the honor and adoration of the Triune God, warranted, commanded, and prescribed by God. Worship is the all-encompassing purpose of all creation. It is the recognition of and proper response to who God is as Sovereign Creator and Redeemer. Our worship exalts and exults in the Lord Jesus Christ. Through corporate and private worship, we participate in the chief purpose of all things—the glory of God.

During MDC gatherings it is our desire that worship flows from the heart and expresses itself in visible ways,

and it is directed by the Scriptures and expressed primarily through reading, teaching, fellowship, the ordinances, songs, and prayers. In these, we remember and rejoice in who God is, what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.

**Scriptures:** Exod 20:1-21; 1 Chron 16:29; Ps 29:2; 53:17; 95:6; Mark 7:6-8; John 4:24; Acts 2:41; 20:7; Rom 11:36; 12:1-2; 1 Cor 11:18-34; 14; 16:1-2; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16-17; 4:16; 1 Tim 4:13; Heb 12:28-29; Rev 15:4

### [3] Preaching

Because of our high view of Scripture, we value Bible-saturated preaching. We typically preach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible. Because we view the Bible as a unified story, of which Jesus is the Hero, we aim to exalt Jesus each week in our preaching—regardless of our selected passage. We believe the best way to help people grow into the image of Christ is by following this approach, so it is our delight to explain what God has said in His Word, to declare what God has done in His Son, and to apply this message to the hearts of people (both believers and unbelievers) with the aid of the Spirit.

**Scriptures:** Gen 1:3ff; 3:15; Ex 20:22; Deut 1:1ff; 1 Sam 3:19; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-8; Jer 1:7-9; Ezek 2:4; Matt 3:1; Luke 4:17-21; 24:27, 44-47; John 1:45; 5:39, 45-46; Acts 2:14-41; 5:42; 6:4; 8:4; 13:13-52; 17:1-4; 18:1-11; 19:8-10, 20; 20:27; 28:28-31; Rom 1:15; 10:14; 12:7; 1 Cor 2:1-5; 15:1-11; Eph 4:11; Col 1:28-29; 1 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:4; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:7; Jam 3:1; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Rev 22:6ff

### [4] Baptism

We practice the Christian ordinance of baptism, in which one who has repented of their sins and trusted Christ alone for salvation is immersed in water, into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism, which does not save, is an act of obedience, commitment, and proclamation, indicating the believer's identification with Christ and his Church. This identification with the crucified, buried, and risen Christ signifies the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in a new and holy life. It is likewise a testimony to the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead.

In regenerate baptism, the church testifies to the faith and repentance expressed by the believer and commits to encourage and assist the believer in this new life in Christ. God likewise acts through baptism to remind believers of his saving grace and call them continually to faithful obedience.

**Scriptures:** Matt 3:6, 13-17; 28:18-20; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:36-39; 16:30-33; 18:8; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-27; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:21

### [5] Lord's Supper

As with regenerate Baptism, the Lord's Supper is a Christian ordinance that the Lord Jesus has given to His church. The Lord's Supper is a sign of the death of Christ for sinners, of His sustaining work in our lives, and of future participation in the Wedding Feast to come in the New Creation for those partaking and observing.

Those partaking in the table participate in this ordinance through the breaking and eating of bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine. This bread and this cup point to our Lord's body and blood. Followers of Christ should partake in the Lord's Supper under the authority of the local church, insofar as they have received Christ's atoning work by faith, examined themselves in repentance and remain in good standing with their local church.

As baptism is the ordinance that Christ has given as a sign connected with entrance into the community of faith, the Lord's Supper is an ongoing ordinance given to the community of faith; thus it should be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian's life as a continual reminder of Christ's atoning work, imminent return, and as a sign of unity in the church. MDC observes this sacrament weekly, as was the pattern of the NT church and in keeping with Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church to "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

**Scriptures:** Matt 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-30, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:17-34, Rev 19:6-10

## **[6] Community**

No matter what season one is in, whether a believer, a doubter, or a skeptic, our desire at MDC is for all who gather with us to feel welcomed. As a covenanted gospel community, we seek by God's grace to bear one another's burdens, celebrate one another's victories, meet one another's needs, and invest in one another's spiritual maturity—regardless of any perceived or real differences that may tend toward division (background, socio-economic statuses, race, interest, etc.). As a result, we seek to be actively involved in one another's lives, even as we open our own lives to receive others. Practically, we cultivate this community involvement through regular, structured gatherings in both large and small groups.

As a reflection of God receiving us into his fellowship, and as an expression of the grace and love available through Christ Jesus, we likewise eagerly extend this community and care to those outside the church.

One practical way all MDC members love one another and the body as a whole is by serving regularly on one of our service teams under the leadership of the elders and deacons.

**Scriptures:** Gen 2:18; John 17; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; Rom 1:11-12; 12:1-21; 1 Cor 12; 2 Cor 1:6-7; Gal 6:2; Eph 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Phil 1:5; 2:1-12; 1 Thess 2:8; Heb 10:24-25; James 2:1-13; 1 John 3:11-24

## **[7] Church Membership**

We believe church membership should be meaningful. In keeping with the pattern of the New Testament Church, which emphasized belonging and accountability for every Christian, we believe meaningful membership closely reflects the language of Scripture and follows the prescription, found in the New Testament, for accountability to other believers and to the elders of the church.

When considering the Word of God, we believe every Christian ought to live as a member of a local church. MDC admits into membership those with a credible, gospel testimony, who have been baptized by immersion as believers, who agree with our Core Beliefs, and who are willing and able to sign the MDC Church Covenant and fulfill its commitments.

**Scriptures:** Acts 2:41-47; 1 Cor 1:2, 5, 12; Heb 13:17

## **[8] Church Discipline**

As commanded in the New Testament, MDC practices restorative, corporate church discipline. We believe Christ has given us this practice for the glory of God, the good of the one being disciplined, the health of the church, and the church's public witness.

Discipline glorifies God and preserves the public witness because the church is called to be a "pillar and buttress of the truth." The church's witness and God's glory are harmed when there is rampant, repetitive, public, serious, unrepentant sin in her midst.

Discipline is also for the good of the one being disciplined. In both Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5, Church discipline is given not ultimately for the punishment of the unrepentant sinner, but for his or her restoration to the church. Since living in sin is a path that leads to destruction, church discipline is a loving act that seeks to rescue the sinner from that end.

At MDC, we will practice church discipline as our Lord outlined in Matthew 18 and under the leadership and oversight of the elders. If someone is guilty of public, serious, and persistent sin, yet remains unrepentant (even after being approached by one, then two or three), the matter will be brought before the covenant members of MDC. If the person refuses to listen, “even to the church,” they will be considered as an unbeliever and removed from membership and the Lord’s Supper.

It should be noted that being removed from membership and the Lord’s Supper does not keep the individual from continuing to meet and worship with other MDC members, as it is still our desire to see them restored to Christ and the church, unless legally prohibited. However, until they repent of their sins they will be kept from the Supper and the privileges of membership.

**Scriptures:** Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5; 2 Cor 2:5-11

## **[9] Church Government**

### *Congregation*

The congregation shares the responsibility of living as a covenant community, including the duty to affirm new leaders, practice church discipline, preserve the church’s doctrine, and participate in her mission. To aid in this, Scripture prescribes two offices for leading the congregation: elders and deacons.

### *Elders (Pastors)*

At MDC, elders will only be men who are responsible for knowing, leading, feeding, and protecting the church and her individual members through prayer, counseling, discipleship, preaching, etc. We practice a plurality of elders, seeing this to be the best reflection of the pattern in the New Testament. All elders are endowed with the same level of authority, with different areas of responsibility in the leadership of the church—all while sharing in the same accountability before God. Elders who are on staff are compensated for full-time employment so they can give more time and energy to leading the church.

### *Deacons*

Likewise, deacons assist the church in its ministry. Deacons are lead servants within the congregation, and they must meet the qualifications set forth in Scripture to take on this role. They bear various practical responsibilities so elders can devote more time and energy to their pastoral duties. We believe Scripture opens the office of deacon to both men and women, as a deacon is primarily a servant.

**Scriptures:** Matt 18:15-20; Acts 6:1-7; 11:21, 29-30; 13:1-3; 14:23-28; 15:22; 20:20-35; 21:18-25; Rom 12:5; 16:1; 1 Cor 5:1-5, 11-15; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal 1:6-9; 6:1; Eph. 4:5-6, 11-16; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:3-9; 3:9-11; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 2:9; 5:1-11

## **[10] Spiritual Gifts**

We believe all true Christians have been gifted with the Holy Spirit upon their conversion and profession of faith in Jesus. These believers are given varied gifts by the Spirit for the advancement of the gospel and the building up of the body of Christ, the Church. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has equipped the church with those gifts necessary for building up the congregation towards maturity and health. We encourage church members

to actively use their gifts to serve the body and advance the Kingdom in accordance with the Scriptures.

**Scriptures:** Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 4:7-11

## **[11] Church Planting**

We believe that God's purpose has always been to have a people for Himself, a people to whom He reveals His glory, and a people through whom He displays His glory. Since the day of Pentecost, we believe the Church has been that people. It is God's desire for His people to grow and to be represented by all tribes, tongues, and nations. MDC believes that church planting is one of the primary methods to accomplish this.

In the Great Commission, Jesus commands the making of disciples by baptizing and teaching all people groups. Following this, the book of Acts tells the story of the spread of the gospel in unreached places and the subsequent planting of local churches. Likewise, the rest of the New Testament is largely an anthology of letters to church plants. At MDC, we seek to follow the model and spirit of the New Testament in our lives and ministry. As a result, we value church planting, and we do so by teaching about it, praying about it, giving to it, and training for it as we encourage members to consider being sent out to plant churches and make disciples of all nations.

**Scriptures:** Exod 6:7; 19:4-6; Deut 4:6-8; Isa 2:2-4; 49:6; Hab 2:14; Ps 96; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; chs. 13-20; 14:21-23; Rom 15:19-21; 1 Cor 12:1-31; Phil 1:5; 4:10-20; 1 Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:14; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 2:9-12; Rev 5:9-10; 21:3

## **[12] Disciple-Making, Evangelism, and Missions**

All Christians, by virtue of their salvation through Christ, have been called to participate in the mission of God through evangelism and disciple-making.

We desire that all MDC members work to make disciples by intentionally working for the spiritual maturity of others through evangelism, instruction, correction, modeling, and encouragement. These disciple-making efforts can and should take a variety of forms—ranging from formal and structured methods (classes, discipleship groups, etc.) to less-formal and organic practices (sharing meals, casual spiritual conversations, etc.)—all directed at helping others follow Christ.

In evangelism, we work to verbally proclaim the message of the gospel to non-believers, seeking to persuade them of the truth of the gospel and calling them to respond in repentance and faith.

Because all people are in need of the gospel, and because Christ is worthy to receive glory and honor from all, we want to evangelize and make disciples “of all nations”—both locally and globally. This means living with missional intentionality in our everyday lives and relationships. It also means giving special attention to engage people around the world through missionary and church planting efforts. We desire for missionaries who have been sent out to remain connected to the local church, receiving both care and pastoral oversight.

In evangelism, disciple-making, and missions, our central message is the gospel of Jesus Christ, our primary tool is the Scriptures, and our sole power is the Holy Spirit.

**Scriptures:** Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Mark 11:17; Luke 24:47; John 4:39; Acts 1:8; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 5:20; Col 1:21-22, 28-29; Rev 5:9-10; 7:9

## **[13] Mercy and Justice Ministry**

At MDC, we believe everyone is made in the imago Dei, the image of God, this means that we will care for everyone from the womb to the tomb. To honor the image of God means recognizing pre-born children and the tragedy of abortion, encouraging adoption and orphan care, valuing people with special needs or neurological differences, promoting racial reconciliation, working to end human trafficking, helping those involved in domestic violence and abuse, seeking to eradicate poverty, reducing death from preventable disease, engaging in prison ministry, serving immigrants and refugees, and caring for those at the end of life.

Both the Old Testament and New Testament emphasize the mandate to love our neighbors as ourselves, especially the weak and vulnerable in society. Faithful Christian living involves such concern for social justice. We seek to have various ministries—both locally and globally—that aim to show such neighbor love.

**Scriptures:** Gen 1:26-27; Exod 22:21-24; Deut 10:17-19; 14:29; 15:4; 27:19; Job 29:12-17; 31:13-28; Ps 33:5; 68:4-5; 139:15-16; 146:7-9; Prov 14:31; 31:8-9; Isa 1:17; 42:1-7; 58:6-7; Jer 22:3, 16; Micah 6:8; Zech 7:10-11; Matt 22:34-40; 23:23-24; Matt 25:31-46; Luke 1:40; 4:17-18; 10:25ff; 11:42; 14:12-13; Acts 4:34-35; 6:1-7; 20:35; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:10; 6:10; 1 Tim 5:3-16; James 1:27; 2:1; 2:15-17; 3:9; 5:1-5; 1 Jn 3:16-18

## **[14] Leadership Development**

MDC is committed to equipping leaders who will lead in pastoring, planting, and otherwise serving local churches. The elders actively work to equip future elders, deacons, small group leaders, and other servant leaders for service and ministry in the context of MDC for the good of the church, the lost, and the city.

In addition, MDC is committed to training missionaries, church planters, and pastors who will, in turn, multiply missionaries, church planters, and pastors throughout the world. We will develop leaders through various avenues of discipleship classes, cohort training, mentoring, and more.

**Scriptures:** Matt 28:18-20; Acts 13; Eph 4:12; 2 Tim 2:1-2

## **[15] Marriage and Family**

### *Marriage*

We believe marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman before God, for the purpose of glorifying God, loving one another, and displaying the relationship between Christ and His Church. We recognize and celebrate the distinct and complementary roles and responsibilities God has given to men and women in living out the marriage covenant.

Only covenant members are able to use MDC facilities for weddings, as approved by the elder council and in accordance with our Facilities Use Policy.

### *Family*

God designed parents to be the lead worshipers and primary disciple-makers in the home. MDC desires to serve and partner with families as we seek to teach children to love God and others.

### *Singleness*

We also believe God has given some people the gift of singleness, not as a secondary status but as a worthy and holy calling free from some of the worldly troubles of marriage. We desire to see single individuals thrive in serving the Lord and the church.

## *Divorce*

In accordance with our beliefs about marriage and in line with the Scriptures, we generally counsel couples away from divorce and toward reconciliation and renewal, which is a reflection of the gospel itself. As a church body, we seek to provide all married couples with support and encouragement toward building strong and healthy marriages that are able to resist divorce and overcome relational conflict and sin.

**Scriptures:** Gen 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Exod 12:26-27; 13:14; 20:1-21; Deut 4:1-10; 6:4-9; 31:9-13; 1 Cor 7:1-40; Eph 5:21-6:4; Col 3:18-23; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12; 2 Tim 3:10-17; Titus 1:6; Heb 12:4-11; 13:4

## **[16] Gender and Sexuality**

***No matter what identity or sexuality one possesses, our desire at MDC is for all who gather with us to feel welcomed. We renounce any hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual who may be wrestling with one or more of these areas and consider them not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of MDC.***

With this in mind, we believe God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between one man and one woman who are married to each other. We believe God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, transgenderism, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of MDC as the local church, and to provide a biblical role model to MDC members and the community, it is imperative that all persons in leadership at MDC in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this statement on gender and sexuality.

We believe God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We believe every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity.

**Scriptures:** Gen 1:26-27; Matt 5:16; 15:18-20; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31; Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:8-11, 18; 7:2-5; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:2; Heb 13:4

*This document does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For the purposes of Missio Dei Church's faith, doctrine, practice, and policy, our council of elders is the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.*