

A Pastoral Note

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Grace and peace. The Briarwood Statement is a prayerfully developed distillation of Biblical truth focused upon equipping the Lord's people to "speak the truth in love," specifically and effectively to those who are in the seemingly unbreakable bondage of homosexuality and experiencing its inevitable consequences of shame, brokenness and hopelessness.

The Briarwood Statement was produced through a patient and deliberative process which was saturated with prayer and dialogue under the oversight of the Briarwood Session and then they unanimously adopted it. The objective was in light of the present theological confusion and missed ministry opportunities to provide a discipleship tool whereby the Lord's people would be equipped and enabled to "contend for the faith" without being contentious and "defend the faith" without being defensive. The desired outcome being a thoughtful and loving communication of the Gospel to those yet ensnared by this sin's guilt and power, and also to believers who may be dealing with the entangling remnant of the sin of homosexuality from which Christ has redeemed them—some of whom, praise the Lord, are on this specific journey of grace within our own fellowship at Briarwood.

We serve Christ together with a God-given Mission to evangelize everyone, everywhere, everyday, in everyplace with the Gospel of grace in Christ and then disciple them patiently and persistently within the Body of Christ as they grow in the grace and knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. This Gospel first communicates the "bad news," which informs us that we are sinners in need of salvation and we cannot save ourselves. Then the greatest words of the Bible...BUT GOD! The Good News is the God of Glory and Grace, who takes us right where we are by the Holy Spirit through Christ to the glory of the Father, promises to never leave us where we are. What is impossible with man is not only possible with God, but has been secured through Christ and by His Spirit.

Therefore, together with theological clarity and ministry compassion, let us indiscriminately bring the Gospel to the lost and to each other so that those who hear by the power of the Spirit might leave the futility of trying to psychologically, cosmetically, and culturally remove the shame of their sin, including homosexuality, and come to Christ, who is the Friend of sinners but who is no Friend to sin, and who can save you from any and all of your sins—homosexuality being no exception. Praise God, His Grace in Christ is greater than all of our sins and any one of our sins. The same answer for any sin is found from the same Savior of sinners.

For Christ, the Gospel and His Church,



The Briarwood Statement

(As adopted by the Session of Briarwood Presbyterian Church at its stated meeting on June 18, 2019)

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." ~ Hebrews 4:15-16

A Theological Ministry Statement on Homosexuality with 10 Affirmations and Denials

In a culture increasingly obsessed with sexuality, marked by rebellion against God's design for the gift and enjoyment of sex as set out in His Word and the resulting sexual brokenness, our desire is to equip Christians to minister with clarity, conviction and compassion to those struggling with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions.

For this purpose, we offer the following Briarwood Statement with the accompanying 10 Affirmations and Denials. We intend the Briarwood Statement to serve as both a clear theological statement of truth amidst the unnecessarily confusing language prevalent in our culture and, at the same time, a practical ministry tool that communicates truth in love.

The Briarwood Statement is not meant as a full theological treatment of homosexuality generally nor is it focused on the related but separate issue of gender identity. Instead, the Statement is designed to acknowledge the deep struggle and sense of bondage that those in sexual sin can experience while affirming the authority, sufficiency and preeminence of Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit as the only true and ultimate source of hope and deliverance.

Our objective in this Statement is to address these issues faithfully and move people intentionally to Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is merciful and gracious.

The Theological Governing Principle

Everyone is born with a sin nature¹ which inevitably manifests itself in sinful thoughts,² desires³ and actions,⁴ corrupting all aspects of human sexuality, none of which are beyond the transforming power of the Gospel.⁵

¹Genesis 3:1-7; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:18,23 (i.e., original sin)

²Genesis 6:5; Psalm 10:4; Mark 7:21 (i.e., indwelling sin)

³Genesis 3:1-7; James 1:14,15; Mark 7:21-23 (i.e., indwelling sin)

⁴Romans 1:24-32; Mark 7:21-23; Galatians 5:16,17 (i.e., actual sins)

⁵Romans 1:16 (i.e., Gospel transformation)

Affirmations

Denials

1	<p>We affirm that each of us is born a sinner and this sin nature will manifest itself in actual sins including sinful heterosexual and/or homosexual thoughts, desires and actions. <i>Gen. 3:1-7; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Matt. 5:27,28; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; James 1:14,15</i></p>	<p>We deny that any supposed genetic link to homosexuality would make homosexual thoughts, desires and actions morally acceptable or normative. <i>Gen. 3:1-7; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 51:5; Matt. 5:27,28; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; James 1:14,15</i></p>
2	<p>We affirm that all homosexual thoughts, desires and actions are sinful. <i>Gen. 1:27-28; Gen. 2:24; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-11</i></p>	<p>We deny that homosexual thoughts, desires and actions are the worst possible sins, or the unpardonable sin, or beyond redemption, forgiveness, and transformation as with any other sin. <i>Matt. 12:31; 1 Cor. 6:9-11</i></p>
3	<p>We affirm that a Christian's identity is solely and exclusively in Christ alone. <i>Acts 11:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 5:16,17; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:1</i></p>	<p>We deny that Christians should identify themselves by any sin in general, or by sexual sins in particular, including identifying as a "gay Christian." <i>Eph. 5:3; 2 Tim. 2:19</i></p>
4	<p>We affirm that, while the term Same Sex Attraction (SSA) is often used by Christians to explain their struggle with homosexuality, the use of this term should be addressed within the Biblical categories of language that distinguish between temptation on the one hand and sinful thoughts, desires and actions on the other hand. <i>Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:15; Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16,17; James 1:14,15</i></p>	<p>We deny that the use or non-use of the term SSA should presumptively be a test of Biblical orthodoxy. <i>1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14; 1 John 4:1-3</i></p>
5	<p>We affirm the need for clarity, intentionality, and community within the church and family as we minister and disciple in a culture that celebrates and promotes experimenting with sinful sexual behaviors in general and homosexuality in particular. <i>Rom. 1:21-32; Rom. 12:1,2; 1 Cor. 10:8; 1 Cor. 12:12-23; Eph. 6:4</i></p>	<p>We deny that the Gospel and the means of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit are incapable of progressively delivering Christians from a sexually obsessed lifestyle and culture. <i>Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 1:15-20; Heb. 7:25</i></p>
6	<p>We affirm that any teaching that declares homosexual thoughts and desires are not sinful unless acted upon to be contrary to Scripture. <i>Rom. 6:11,12; Rom. 7:5; Eph. 2:3; James 1:14,15; 1 Pet. 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:11</i></p>	<p>We deny that homosexual thoughts or desires are non-sinful impulses, sexual disabilities to be managed or indicative of a morally neutral sexual orientation. <i>Mark 7:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11,18</i></p>
7	<p>We affirm that many Christians who experience homosexual thoughts and desires sincerely identify such thoughts and desires as unwanted. <i>Rom. 7:14-25; Gal.5:16-25</i></p>	<p>We deny that a Christian is not culpable or accountable even for unwanted sinful sexual thoughts and desires. <i>Mark 7:21; Rom. 7:14-21; Gal. 3:22</i></p>
8	<p>We affirm that every Christian is called to flee temptation, repent of sin and mortify the sinful desires of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit through the God-given means of grace. <i>Matt. 26:41; Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 10:13,14; Col. 3:5,6; 1 Tim. 6:11,12; 2 Tim. 2:22</i></p>	<p>We deny that sexual sins in general and homosexual sins in particular are to be accepted, managed, redefined, redirected or reordered. <i>Isaiah 5:20; Rom. 6:11-14; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5,6</i></p>
9	<p>We affirm that all Christians, including those who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions, are delivered from the penalty and power of sin and therefore are free from all condemnation. <i>John 8:36; Rom. 8:1,31-39</i></p>	<p>We deny that Christians who struggle with homosexual thoughts, desires and actions should suffer in silence or retreat into a subculture rather than into the Body of Christ. <i>John 13:34,35; Rom. 9:33; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:4; Heb. 10:19-25</i></p>
10	<p>We affirm that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, completely delivers some Christians from particular sins—including homosexual thoughts, desires and actions—miraculously and instantaneously, while others He progressively delivers through the ordinary means of grace with varying and uneven degrees of progress until they are made perfect in heaven. <i>Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 5:26,27; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:2,3</i></p>	<p>We deny that Christians will achieve sinless perfection in thoughts, desires or actions this side of eternity. <i>Rom. 7:21; Phil. 3:12; 1 John 1:8</i></p>