

# Boyne Christian Ministerial Association Community Marriage and Divorce Policy

## General Marriage and Marriage Dissolution - Secular and Ecclesiastical Policy

1. The gift of marriage is ordained by God as a covenant between God, husband and wife as defined as one man and one woman;
2. As a covenant between God husband and wife, marriage is also a civil contract between husband, wife and state;
3. There are significant differences between the secular standards for marriage and divorce and Christian ecclesiastical standards for marriage and divorce;
4. The Boyne Christian Ministerial Association recognizes the following state standards and must be followed:
  - a. The state's authority over marriage is under the police power to protect health and welfare of society;
  - b. The churches recognize that they have no authority to protect persons or property and that authority has been specifically granted to the state;
  - c. The Boyne City Christian Ministerial Association recognizes that only the state has the right to grant civil divorce;
  - d. The Michigan divorce statute establishes a standard that divorce will be granted when there remains "*no reasonable likelihood that the marriage can be preserved*"
5. This policy addresses our belief that there is an ecclesiastical procedure to consider that there is a "*reasonable likelihood*" that marriage and be preserved before the state acts.
  - a. Scripture mandates an ecclesiastical procedure for resolving disputes (**Matthew 18: 15-17**)<sup>1</sup> and indicates the importance of completing this prior to a final court judgment, **I Corinthians 6:1-10**;<sup>2</sup>
  - b. For those who have religious beliefs, the state recognizes that ministers have the

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>15</sup>"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.* <sup>17</sup>And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?

<sup>2</sup>Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

<sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? <sup>4</sup>If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? <sup>5</sup>I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup>But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

right to perform the solemnization of marriage in the manner heretofore used and practiced in their respective societies or denominations.

- c. Christian ecclesiastical practices and usage are embodied either explicitly or implicitly in a Christian Marriage Solemnization.
  - d. The marriage solemnization is the actual covenant that establishes the marriage vows before God and witnesses and even without being reduced to writing those vows are binding before God;
  - e. Irrespective of the valid oral marriage vows (following Biblical standards) that constitute a covenant between husband wife and God, the state does not recognize such oral marriage vows that have not been reduced to writing;
6. The Boyne Christian Ministerial Association recommends that churches encourage-urge couples to at least reduce marriage vows (following Biblical standards) to writing and have them witnessed in the same manner as the marriage license and then file these vows with the marriage license.
- a. When the solemnization is reduced to writing, it will be considered by the Courts in any matters dealing with the marriage;
  - b. This policy together with the attached Outline of Ecclesiastical Matters sets forth the core Christian practices and the ecclesiastical steps that should be exhausted prior to the court dissolution of the civil marriage contract.
7. The Boyne Ministerial Association asks the Courts to:
- a. Assure that all Alternative Dispute Resolutions (**ADR**) alternatives are exhausted prior to a final judgment of divorce being granted.
  - b. Provide or encourage an opportunity for an acknowledged married Christian husband and wife to evaluate these ecclesiastical alternatives;
  - c. Include an option for such couples to determine whether there are ecclesiastical matters that should be addressed prior to divorce;
  - d. Allow the church to complete Christian Ecclesiastical Dispute resolution (as set forth in the Outline of Ecclesiastical Matters that the church(es) prior to a final judgment of divorce being granted.

Approved: by Boyne Christian Ministerial Association on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2005

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor Mark Bullock

# Boyne Christian Ministerial Association

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## Outline of Ecclesiastical Matters in Boyne City Ministerial Marriage and Divorce Policy

The Boyne Ministerial Association sets forth the following outline of ecclesiastical matters not by way of limitation, but to give examples of the types of matters that will be addressed by the churches through the **Matthew 18:15-20** process and authority. It is acknowledged that the primary purpose of this process is to bring restoration to the marriage relationship through application of God's Word. These ecclesiastical matters are beyond the purview of the Courts and may provide the best opportunity to restore the marriage.

### Authority and Accountability

- Church Leadership must give account for those the Holy Spirit has given to them<sup>i</sup>

### Shared Accountability

- Husband has been given accountability for his home<sup>ii</sup>
- Husband must know those to whom he is accountable<sup>iii</sup>
- Each person must give account to God<sup>iv</sup>

### Mandate for Unity

- There is a mandate that there be no divisions<sup>v</sup>

### Private Confrontation a Mandate

- Must confront a person who trespasses or sins against you in private<sup>vi</sup>
- Private means without talking to others about it<sup>vii</sup>
- Caution – If in fear of harm, may be done over phone etc. to protect the person

### Nature of Sin

- No one is without sin<sup>viii</sup>
- May be merely missing the mark<sup>ix</sup>

### Prayer should Proceed Discussion

- Proper attitude of heart before God<sup>x</sup>

### God Establishes Marriage Relationships

- Husband to love wife, headship carried out through servanthood<sup>xi</sup>
- Wife to respect and reverence husband<sup>xii</sup>



### **God's Word To Control Relationship**

- Scripture inspired by God given for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Primacy and Attitudes Needed for Confrontation**

- Prior to worship<sup>xiv</sup>
- Rebuke combined with forgiveness<sup>xv</sup>
- Examine and correct own errors first<sup>xvi</sup>
- Vulnerability caution<sup>xvii</sup>
- Tools for reaching unity of mind<sup>xviii</sup>
- Praying and sharing own fault or similar sin first<sup>xix</sup>

### **Eschatology, Spiritual Warfare, Works of the Flesh, God's Correction**

- There may be adverse effects on marriage due to eschatology time frame<sup>xx</sup>
- Spiritual warfare issues<sup>xxi</sup>
- Works of the flesh<sup>xxii</sup>
- Correction by the Lord<sup>xxiii</sup>
- Appropriating victory<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **If Private Confrontation Fails, Office of Witness**

- Office of witness, sacrificial role<sup>xxv</sup>
- Fulfilling office avoids meddling<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Establishing God's Word *Logos* by witnesses speaking it, *Rhema*, in unity<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Authority of office<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Attitude and needed discernment in exercising office<sup>xxix</sup>

### **Church to confirm Word established by witnesses, primary purposes:**

- Limited to ecclesiastical matters
- Utilized when rejection of *Word* presented by witnesses<sup>xxx</sup>
- Protection against the leaven of sin<sup>xxxi</sup>
- Notice of **Matthew 18:17** process limited to statement of process<sup>xxxii</sup>

# Biblical Basis for Addressing Ecclesiastical Matters

i	Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2, 3
ii	I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23,24
iii	Hebrews 13:7
iv	Romans 14:12
v	I Corinthians 1:10; Psalm 133:1; Romans 12:16
vi	Matthew 18: 15
vii	Proverbs 26:20, 22 gossip actually increases strife and causes a <i>wound</i> - <b>לָחַם</b> <i>lâham law-ham</i> ' A primitive root; properly to <i>burn</i> in, that is, (figuratively) to <i>rankle</i> : - wound.
viii	Romans 3:23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 1:28-32; I John 1:8
ix	<b>ἁμαρτάνω</b> <i>hamartanō ham-ar-tan'-o</i> Perhaps from G1 (as a negative particle) and the base of G3313; properly to <i>miss</i> the mark (and so <i>not share</i> in the prize), that is, (figuratively) to <i>err</i> , especially (morally) to <i>sin</i> :—for your faults, offend, sin, trespass.
x	I Timothy 2:8; II Chronicles 33:12; Psalm 66:18; Lamentations 3: 55, 56; Matthew 5:44; Mark 11:25; James 4:8
xi	Ephesians 5:25-30, 33; Colossians 3:19; I Peter 3:7; Mark 10:44
xii	Ephesians 5:33; Genesis 3:16; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1
xiii	II Timothy 3:16; Psalms 19:7-11; 119:97-104; Proverbs 6:23; Romans 15:4; Hebrews 4:12
xiv	Matthew 5:23-24
xv	Luke 17:3-4
xvi	Matthew 7: 1-5; Romans 12:17, 18
xvii	Matthew 7:6; Proverbs 9:7, 8; II Peter 2:22
xviii	I Peter 3:8-12
xix	James 5:16; Daniel 9:20-22; John 9:31; I John 3:22
xx	Matthew 24:12; James 4:1-4;
xxi	Ephesians 6:12-18
xxii	Galatians 5:13-25
xxiii	Hebrews 12:6, 7
xxiv	I John 4:4; John 10:28-30; I John 5:4
xxv	Matthew 18:16 - <b>μάρτυς</b> <i>martus mar'-toos</i> Of uncertain affinity; a <i>witness</i> (literally [judicially] or figuratively [generally]); by analogy a “martyr”:—martyr, record, witness.
xxvi	Proverbs 26:17
xxvii	<b>ῥῆμα</b> - <i>rhēma hray'-mah</i> From G4483; an <i>utterance</i> (individually, collectively or specifically); by implication a <i>matter</i> or <i>topic</i> (especially of narration, command or dispute); with a negative <i>naught</i> whatever:—+ evil, + nothing, saying, word.
xxviii	Matthew 18:18-20
xxix	Galatians 6:1; I Thessalonians 5:14
xxx	Matthew 18:17; Matthew 16:19; 23:23 Titus 3:10
xxxi	Romans 16:17, 1 8; I Corinthians 5:4-6, 9-13; Galatians 5:9
xxxii	I Timothy 5:20; I Timothy 1:20; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13