

I. Social Issue Statements of Renewal Church of McAlester

- I.1. Beneath is a list of many of today's most pressing social issues, followed by statements written with our best effort to balance the grace and truth which defined Jesus Christ our Lord (John 1:14; 17), and built from our conviction that God's Word is our ultimate authority. Visit our Convictions, Persuasions, and Opinions to learn more.
- I.2. We ask that you keep these three principles in mind as you read through this list:
1. We are aware that the Church, historically and globally, has not always stewarded well the balance of biblical truth with loving grace and acceptance in all areas.
 2. We believe peace is found in the truth of the Gospel, which calls us to keep our eyes on Jesus and His incredible love, forgiveness, and extension of grace to all who would believe in Him.
 3. These positions are not ranked in importance, they are merely our best effort at applying God's authoritative Word to our culture's current most frequently asked questions.

I.3. Alcohol

- (a) Scripture never condemns the non-intoxicating consumption of alcohol; however, it does condemn drunkenness (see Lk. 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). Inappropriately used, alcohol can damage one's health, safety, job, and relationships.
- (b) As followers of Christ, we must ensure that the exercise of our freedom to consume alcohol never becomes "a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor. 8:9), including those with a propensity towards intoxication, victims of alcohol-related tragedies, relatives of alcoholics, children and under-age students, and pre-Christian skeptics who assume alcohol is forbidden and seek to find faults in Christians. Our personal preferences are always of secondary concern to the reputation of Christ, since we have been crucified with Christ and thus no longer live, but rather, live by and through Christ indwelling in us (Gal. 2:20).
- (c) Renewal Church partners must do everything possible to create a safe place for all people, while also preventing potential legal and controversies of reputation; therefore, we choose to abstain from serving or consuming alcohol at all Renewal Church-related functions, living by the spirit of the law over the letter of the law, when in doubt.

I.4. Identity & Gender

- (a) We believe, as children of God, our identity and value are found in our relationship with Jesus. We reject social status, marital status, sin struggle, sexuality, or even our gender as the ultimate definition or summation of our identity (Gal. 3:28). All these things can have an undue grip on our heart and sense of identity. Instead, we are called to holiness and the pursuit of intimacy and communion with God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- (b) We believe God created the distinction of gender between male and female within His good design, with each gender serving unique purposes within creation (Gen. 1:27–30). We recognize that, culturally, the topics of sexuality and gender are uniquely intertwined, and present deep and complex issues. In pursuit of conforming ourselves to God’s design, we believe first our identity should conform and cling to who we are in Christ, and second our biological gender is given to us by God to steward for God’s purposes.

I.5. Sanctity of Life

- (a) We believe life is a gift from God and must always be regarded as sacred (Gen. 1:27). From conception to death, the beginning and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence (Job 14:5). Every person, including preborn children, elderly individuals, those with special needs and others marginalized by society, possesses inherent dignity and immeasurable worth.

I.6. Abortion

- (a) We believe the life inside a mother’s womb is a living person and therefore, we believe the act of abortion is incongruent with God’s will (Ps. 139:13–16; Jer. 1:4, 5; Ex. 20:13). We implore anyone considering abortion to seek counsel and help with God-honoring alternatives from Renewal Church and our network of support partners. At the same time, ours is not a message of guilt for past choices, but of grace—knowing God offers full forgiveness to anyone who repents of sin and turns to Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13–15)—and we seek to embrace, welcome and support each person in his or her spiritual and emotional healing at Renewal Church.

I.7. Suicide

- (a) We believe suicide is not the way a human life should end and is incongruent with God’s will (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Often the result of untreated depression and/or pain and suffering, we strongly appeal to anyone contemplating suicide to seek pastoral, medical, and therapeutic support. Suicide is not “victimless,” and we consider the

stigma that so often falls on surviving family and friends unjust. We lovingly embrace surviving family members and encourage them to find community, support and emotional healing in the church. We affirm nothing, including suicide, separates us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39) and is not in and of itself an “unforgivable sin.”

I.8. Sexuality, Singleness, and Marriage

- (a) In a culture that often considers seeking pleasure its highest priority, we believe as Christ-followers we must instead put expression of sexuality in its proper perspective—a gift that should be enjoyed and honored within God’s design, not as an essential element of happiness or fulfillment.
- (b) We are reminded that “none are without sin” and “all have fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Our hearts break for all who are challenged and struggle in pursuit of God’s call to sexual purity. No matter the struggle, we welcome the opportunity to walk alongside everyone in pursuit of Christ together.
- (c) All are welcome to attend Renewal Church and to participate in activities and ministries within the church, just as all are welcome to the free gift of grace found in Christ.
- (d) However, after repenting of sin and turning to Christ, we lovingly insist that any believers actively behaving sexually outside of God’s design wait for a period sufficient to establish a pattern of freedom and victory prior to being a candidate for a leadership role at Renewal Church (I Tim 3:16).
- (e) **Sex:** We believe sex within God’s design is always a mirror of His oneness involving the whole person (physical and spiritual), uniting, in marriage, one man and one woman into “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). We believe sexual expression is a gift from God given to man and woman in marriage— and only them—to solidify and enhance their covenant relationship (Eph. 5:21). We believe violation of the marriage covenant and sexual expression outside its bounds stand in contrast to God’s design and is thus sinful. Examples of these include, but are not limited to, adultery, polygamy, polyamory, pornography, homosexuality, co-habitation, sex before marriage, or any sexual relationship where one or both partners are exploitative or abusive (Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:27, 28; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9–13; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3).
- (f) **Singleness** We believe “singleness” is a gift and an integral part of God’s design within the body of Christ (1 Cor. 7:7–8). We reject that

singleness is simply a “season” with the ultimate goal of marriage. We believe God has called all believers, whether single or married, to be agents of His redemptive purposes in the world.

- (g) **Marriage** We believe marriage is a lifelong, exclusive, and interdependent relationship between a man and a woman. Scripture offers healthy guidelines for a lifelong, loving, monogamous marriage between a man and a woman in terms of procreation, godly intimacy, the nurture of children, and sexual activity (Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:2).
- (h) **Divorce** We believe God loves every divorced person wholly and fully, as do we. We recognize that divorce is a reality, as evidenced by sin and brokenness. Because “God hates divorce” (Mal. 2:16) for the pain and division it so often causes, we strongly encourage biblical reconciliation and restoration within marriage (presuming neither person has remarried and/or that there is no threat to someone’s health or safety), and accordingly, we offer a range of marriage-strengthening ministries in hopes that no marriage ends in divorce. We recognize that the high frequency of divorce affects numerous persons in the church, and thus we also offer and encourage involvement in our divorce- recovery ministries. Neither divorce nor remarriage serves as single qualifying or disqualifying issue for leadership in the church. We work to understand the fuller picture of a person’s story, while guiding individuals into a lifestyle consistent with God’s Word (Matt. 5:27–32; Matt. 19:3–9; 1 Cor. 7:10–16).
- (i) **Homosexuality** We believe God loves all people (John 3:16), including those who are sexually attracted, oriented and/or identify themselves in a sexual lifestyle outside of God’s original design. Though we recognize the practice of homosexuality as sin, we emphasize grace, love, and the sacred worth of all persons in the midst of truth. We also recognize that the temptation of same-sex attraction is not in and of itself a sin (James 1:13–15).