

Prayer of Confession and request for Forgiveness

1) In the past, we as a body have treated one another in ways that have been ungracious and unloving. Often we have sought to protect our little areas of authority rather than being submissive to each other and to the Lord. This has cause great difficulty among us.

As the spiritual leaders of our church we desire to lead the congregation in a confession/prayer asking for forgiveness for our church's dealings with those that we have pushed to the side in the past. We speak on behalf of the whole congregation, testifying to our corporate responsibility as a body, not speaking for any smaller groups or individuals in the body.

In this discussion we are thinking particularly of:

- * Our brothers and sisters who have more recently come into our midst
- * Our brothers and sisters who are of other visible ethnic groups
- * Our youth and younger adults
- * Our long term and senior members
- * Those that identified themselves as "Concerned members"
- * Those that identified themselves as "Other Concerned Members".
- * Those that have been shocked and taken unawares by the actions of this last number of years.

When we speak of being "Pushed aside" we mean that in the past, especially the recent past (last 2-3 years), individuals and groups have:

- * been blamed for real or more often perceived church difficulties
- * Not listened to or made to feel that their concerns have been important
- * Not cared for when they have faced real fears about the future of our church
- * Had their involvements in the "important" ministries of our church downplayed, minimized or rejected.

2) The events of the last couple of years have shocked and destabilized the spiritual and emotional lives of those brothers and sisters who had no idea of the issues and tensions that our congregation faced. The resignation of Pastor Tim was an “out of the blue” occurrence that floored many. This made these brethren wonder if things were at all appropriate amongst us and if godly behaviour was happening in our body. For the upheaval we caused these fellow congregants, and the seeming lack of response to the hurt many felt in these times, we as a body ask for forgiveness. With regard to our more recently arrived brothers and sisters, we as a church have made you feel initially welcome, but then gave you the impression that you were outsiders, not really knowing the heartbeat of our church. Your unique walks with the Lord were taken as not being helpful to the life of this body and so were disregarded. For this we ask your forgiveness.

3) With regard to our brothers and sisters who are of other visible ethnic groups, this body made you feel like you didn't belong because we did not embrace the fact that your culture was different from ours but our God was just the same as yours. Your evident abilities sometimes were glossed over because we felt that we would lose our church culture to you. We as a church did not deal biblically with the traces of prejudice that we faced. In recent days we have made you feel pushed to the side because some of your greatest advocates for ministry have left or been apparently silenced. Some of you, who have been faithful to our body for over a decade, have been overlooked for appropriate leadership roles because you were “too new”. For this we ask your forgiveness.

4) With regard to our youth and young adults, both recently and as part of our church culture, we have discounted your spiritual gifts and your wisdom. We ignored the admonition by Paul to Timothy, “Let no Man despise your youth” (1 Tim.4:12), by not giving you the leadership roles that were in keeping with your spiritual maturity. Your contemporaries have often felt it necessary to leave because there was seemingly no place for them here. The Church culture would not minister to the needs their hearts craved. As for our youth, we have pushed

you to one side by not working harder to specifically minister to you in the Worship services. We, as a church, did not seem to notice, when the difficulties of the last few years erupted, that you all were being impacted greatly. The families of staff and leading members of our church were your friends. These young folk were, often unwittingly, grievously hurt and we did not understand that that wounding would so affect you. For this we ask for your forgiveness.

5) With regard to our older and senior members we as a church, did not really hear the importance of what you were saying. Your heritage to us as those who founded and sacrificed to build this church and its testimony was treated as of little importance. The fact that your offspring left this church despite your desire to build here in order to have a more readily accessible facility really is painful. We discounted that. The loss of cultural stability in our church for you and the real concerns you expressed about the theological issues that you held dear were not taken into account as they should have been. The move away from the older style of pastoral care and typical ministry was hard for you. Comments were made from the body that explicitly made you feel that you were being placed to the side, for your day had come and gone. These comments were unwise, unkind, and not true. For this we ask you to forgive us.

6) In recent years, a group of our people made attempts to bring to the attention of the leadership of the church their concerns and their fears. After individual attempts were seemingly ignored, the concerned members formed a group who sent letters of concern that were combined and expressed together under the name "Some Concerned Members". The Elders met with this group and after a while it was believed by the "Concerned Members" that their concerns were not heard so a larger group approached the elders again. The elders and many in the church came to different conclusions regarding the issues presented. These approaches, some felt, led to the resignation of Pastor Tim. Therefore the anger of many in the body was directed toward individuals in this group. We did not appreciate the reaction that would be unleashed upon these brothers and sisters

when the resignation occurred. The folk who were purported to be in this group were treated poorly despite the fact that the group really felt that they had legitimate concerns for which they had to stand and for which they must see change. The mere fact that some expressed concern and did what they believed God had called them to do was in the minds of others cause for them to be ostracized and rejected. In as much as we as a church did not deal actively and quickly to calm such attitudes and actions as a church, we are to be blamed. For this we ask for forgiveness.

7) Finally, as a consequence of the seeming power of the petitions of the “Concerned members”, after Pastor Tim left, a second group, “Other Concerned Members” began a petition to express their frustrations and somewhat opposite concerns. The real hurt and frustration felt by this group at the leaving of Pastor Tim was not adequately appreciated by the body. The sense of some that others had “won” pained the hearts of these brothers and sisters greatly. Their ambition, similar to the Young adult and Youth’s ambition, was to see a different culture among believers be acceptable. This was not done. This group had a real sense that they were let down by the church. For this we ask forgiveness.

Curtis) We as a church will now turn to ask our dear God and loving Heavenly Father to help us in the future to live lives of submission to Him, His word and to each other, exhibiting Spirit empowered love to each group in our church.

(Curtis will conclude)