

# ALTO



## REFORMED CHURCH

### ARTICLES

#### How Do You Sort Through Tough Ethical Questions? (Part 8 of Pathways to Maturity)



By Pastor Kevin Van Wyk

Ethics are really complicated today. Well, they've been complicated for a long time. Determining and then living according to a set of moral principles is hotly debated in our culture.

Recently, a complicated situation made waves in the Christian world. Pastor Alistair Begg was removed from 180 radio stations under American Family Association for advising a grandmother to attend her grandson's transgender wedding if she had communicated that she disagreed with his view on gender and marriage.

The Bible is clear that marriage is for a man and a woman (Genesis 1:27, 2:24; Matt. 5:27-32, 19:1-12; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:1-7). Attending a ceremony certainly implies support and Warren Smith makes a strong argument in support of the AFA actions (<https://ministrywatch.com/editors-notebook-alistair-begg-made-a-mistake/>). He has no tolerance for Christians participating in such a ceremony.

Interestingly, Focus on the Family, while agreeing with Biblical marriage, suggests this may be a disputable issue (Rom. 14). (<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family->

[qa/deciding-whether-to-attend-a-same-sex-wedding/](#)) The Center for Faith, Sexuality & Gender has several resources for families and ministry leaders on related issues. They give the most nuanced answer, listing several things you should consider in your decision and leaving the door open to participation

(<https://www.centerforfaith.com/resources/pastoral-papers/01-should-christians-attend-a-same-sex-wedding-ceremony>).

Some of you remember the days where the pastor would ask if anyone objects to the marriage they should speak up. This provided some great drama for Hollywood weddings. However, this practice disappeared a while back. I still have the family and congregation take a vow to support the couple, which I certainly would not stand up for in an unbiblical marriage ceremony.

*(To the family-standing)*

*Will you receive \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ into your family and do everything in your power to uphold and care for them as they establish themselves as a family within your own. **We will.***

*(To all present-standing)*

*Will you who witness this covenant between \_\_\_ and \_\_\_ respect their marriage, pray for them and sustain them with your friendship and care? **We will.***

Also, note that the Alliance of Reformed Churches requires the affirmation of the Great Lakes Catechism of Marriage and Sexuality (<https://arc21.org/creeds-confessions>) for all pastors, elders and deacons. Performing same-sex marriages in th Alliance is not permitted.

In the end, it's clear attending a homosexual wedding is a difficult moral question. **It is also clear that Christians must understand the principles taught in the Bible to determine what they should do.** This is where the rubber hits the road. As part of ordination (and Christian maturity for all believers), we not only need to know the Old Testament, the New Testament, and how to interpret the Bible, but we must apply the principles to today's difficult questions.

**Let me throw some other ethical questions at you...**

- Can Christians get tattoos?
- Should Christians be cremated?
- Should Christians attend a wedding of a couple that is living together?

- Should churches only sing psalms?
- Should churches allow for leaders who are divorced?
- Does the second commandment prohibit art in church?
- Is it permissible to work on Sunday?
- Should women be lead pastors?

**Do you have biblical answers to these? Having a conviction or an opinion is not sufficient! Spiritual maturity is having solid biblical answers to difficult questions.**

**Spiritual maturity is also having the courage to act on those convictions.** In 1 Samuel 2, we see a terrible failure of a religious leader. Eli is still the head priest, but he has turned a blind eye to his son's desecration of the temple. Eli, Hophni and Phinehas die for their sins and God replaces them with a faithful leader. Samuel rises up to be a godly man who led Israel back to their God.

**What about you?** Do you know biblical ethics? Are you living biblical ethics?

**PRAYER:** Lord, help us discern your truth, listen to your Spirit, confess sin, and live rightly in our world. Give us wisdom to know what is right and the courage to do what is right. Amen.

### **PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS:**

1. Join a small group and open up about your struggles.
2. Read *Christian Ethics* by Wayne Grudem.

## **Equipping Youth Update**

By Jessa Wedel

Prayer Requests and Praises from Youth Ministry:

1. Praise God! We've had several students hit a "30 day streak" on their Bible app, meaning that they've been at the very least, reading the verse of the day for 30 days straight!
2. Praise God! One of our high school students has been able to lead 2 of his friends to Christ over the past few weeks!
3. Praise God! Corey Ruis and Ashlan Bruins both shared their testimonies at

youth group last week. It was great to hear how God has worked in their lives!

4. Pray that our students would continue to read and understand their Bibles so they can better understand God's character and His plan for this world.
5. Pray for our Before School Bible Clubs at Waupun, Laconia, and Randolph - that students would continue to invite their friends and we'd see a growth in number and in faith.
6. Pray for our Middle School Overnighter Feb 9-10 at the Union Youth Center
7. Pray for our winter retreat to Silver Birch Ranch with the high schoolers Feb 23-25

## Equipping Children & Families Update

By Lynnae Loomans

### Upcoming Events:

No Bible Class Feb 14th. Join us for Ash Wednesday Service at 7pm.

Pinewood Derby is April 17th at 5:30-7:30 at the Alto Community Center. Sign up and grab your car kit at the Childrens & Families Resource Center.

## Reverse Offering Stories

At the end of last year the Deacons left ten \$100 bills in the pews for people to use to bless others. Here are a few more stories of how those gifts were used:

- When we got the \$100 we challenged all of the members of the family to add their own money to it so we could find a family to help with Christmas. We were connected with a family dealing with cancer through a school counselor and we were able to anonymously buy their kids Christmas presents and help the family with gas and groceries too. We truly felt the joy of giving and hope to continue this tradition with our family in the future!

## MESSAGES

Thank you for all the love and support shown to our families with Paul's passing. The prayers, texts, cards, food, rides, gifts and outpouring of love were and continue to be very much appreciated.

-Deb, Ben, Dan, Peter and families

Sincere thanks for all the prayers, cards, visits, calls, and concerns for Don and I.  
Thanks also from both of us for the chocolates. GOD IS GOOD!

-Don and Pat Vande Zande

Thank you for the Christmas card and gift card. I really appreciate the thoughts and prayers.

Thanks again-

Easton Hull

Another Christmas season has passed which brings us to our annual thank you for the gift of Guth's candy from our church family. We appreciate being remembered and want to thank Keith Loomans for the delivery.

-Dave & Donna Henker

Thank you to the congregation for remembering me and for the holiday card and the Walmart gift card.

-Ella Bruins

Thank you for the cards and words of encouragement during the passing of Lloyd.

-Berwyn & Audrey Van Buren and family

Thank you for the candy and Christmas cards. It was all very much appreciated.  
God is good.

-Marilyn Westerveld

I would like to thank the church for the box of candy and to Burt Wiersema for bringing it.

Thanks again-

Marilyn Kamphuis

## **EVENTS**

# February Events

Feb  
09

Friday, 8:00pm

## Middle School Overnighter

Middle Schoolers are invited to our annual Overnighter at The Union Friday 8pm–Saturday 8am. Talk to Jessa for more details.

Feb  
14

Wednesday, 7:00pm

## Ash Wednesday Service

Join us for the Ash Wednesday service.

Feb  
17

Saturday, 10:00am

## Waupun Ice Fest

Stop by our table at Main Street Bistro between 10am–4pm for a special treat while you check out the different ice sculptures around Waupun.

Feb  
23

Friday

## High Schoolers at Silver Birch

The High Schoolers head to Silver Birch for the weekend. Pray for a great weekend of connecting with God.



## NEWS

### Update from Consistory:

- The Consistory approved the affirmation of Randy McDaniel and Ian Van Wyk for the Ministry Ordination Pathway through the Alliance of Reformed Churches. This does not mean they are ordained but that Alto Reformed Church supports them beginning this process.
- Keith Twigg from Slingshot Group is reposting the Associate Pastor position and is feeling positive about applicants.

- The Consistory approved the Equipping Youth Director job description recommended by the Exec Team. The job has been posted.
- The Consistory decided to continue sending children to Camp Manitoqua this year but the Equipping Children & Families Team will look into the possibility of other options for the future.

## **Alliance Update from Seth Sundstrom**

**“We believe the church’s faithful witness to Jesus is the hope of the world.”**

Dear friends,

On January 11 and 12 the Alliance Board of Directors met in Sioux Falls for an in-person meeting. Prior to that, in the Fall of 2023, we had communicated our desire to search for and hire a CEO to accomplish the mission of the Alliance moving into the future. After many hours of discussion, prayer and discernment, the Board has decided to press pause on that process. Instead, the Board has committed to a 12-month plan of collectively doing the work that a CEO would have done, acting as a hands-on management board for 2024. Each Board member has committed to playing an active part in this plan through the end of 2024.

### **Board Transition, Extended Terms, and Officers**

In the last six months, we have added several new Board members as Alliance Networks have become more self-sufficient and been ready to nominate someone to serve the Alliance. Jeff Elzinga (Harvest), Ron Fischer (At-Large) and Craig Gilbert (Michigan Catalyst) began serving in July 2023 and we recently welcomed Lee Vande Voort (Upper Mississippi Valley) to the Board. With these additions and with our work this year as a management-focused Board, the new Board Members requested that Joel Baar (Launch Board Member), Jamie Dykstra (Launch Board Member), and Seth Sundstrom (Interim Board Member) stay on the Board through December 2024 rather than ending their term in June. Joel, Jamie, and Seth have agreed to this, which will be a great help for board transition and for the work before us. Jamie Dykstra was elected as President, Jeff Elzinga as Vice President, and Lee Vande Voort as Secretary. Ron Fischer remains as Treasurer. Joel Baar will serve as immediate Past President for 2024.

### **Restated “Why” for the Alliance**

As part of our recent in-person Board meeting in Sioux Falls, we spent time focusing on the “Why” for the Alliance. Why does the Alliance exist? Jesus. Jesus is the hope

of the world. The church is how Christ has chosen for that hope to be shared with the world. Our collective testimony as his church and as The Alliance is powerful and effective when that witness is lived out faithfully. So, why does the Alliance exist?

“We believe the church’s faithful witness to Jesus is the hope of the world.”

Or stated another way, the Board believes our organization exists to be an alliance of Christ-centered Reformed churches seeking to faithfully fulfill the Great Commission. The Board believes the Networks of the Alliance are one of our greatest strengths for equipping churches to witness to Jesus.

The above Why statement (in quotes) will inform the Board’s approach to the What (what we will do) and the How (how we will do it). Each of these elements will be aligned with The Alliance’s Unifying Beliefs – the document currently being circulated and refined within The Alliance, and which will become the successor to our original Organizational Convictions statement.

“We believe the church’s faithful witness to Jesus is the hope of the world.”

### **What’s Next?**

The Board will continue meeting the first and third Tuesdays of each month, mostly by Zoom. We anticipate another in-person Board meeting later this year. We will dig into collectively serving as the “Interim CEO” for this year, while also intentionally transitioning over time to a policy governance board. Our approach will be to focus on “ends” – the results we discern that God would like to see from the Alliance as a whole – which will inform the specific decisions and actions needed to achieve those ends. Over the next few weeks we will continue discerning how to operationalize our hands-on management priority for this year, and effectively deploy our Alliance staff to help fulfill the vision.

Please be in prayer during 2024 for the Board and for the many Networks, groups and individuals who serve Christ through their work for and in The Alliance!