

STATEMENT OF CORE BELIEFS

These are the views which every member affirms as the core beliefs of the church and which each member does not deny.

1. *The Scripture*

We believe that the Bible, composed of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. The original manuscripts were verbally inspired by God, as holy men were moved by the Spirit to record God's special revelation to man. Divine inspiration extended equally and fully to all parts of Scripture. We also believe that the original manuscripts were free from error. We believe that the Bible is the supreme, authoritative, and infallible rule of faith and conduct. The Bible is the written Word testifying to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. The Bible can be properly understood through careful study under the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:31; John 5:39, 16:12-15, 20:31; Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

2. *The Triune God*

We believe that there is One True and Living God. He is holy, all-glorious, unchangeable, sovereign, eternal, immortal, invisible, and He is worthy of all worship. God is transcendent yet imminent, needing nothing outside of Himself yet delighting to reveal Himself and relate to His creation. We believe that God eternally exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. These three are of one essence, yet each executes distinct offices as persons. All three Persons are equal in every divine perfection, and are all equally worthy of glory, majesty, and honor (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 1:1, 1:18, 15:26; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 13:14, Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:17).

a. *God the Father*

We believe that God the Father is the creator and sustainer of all creation. He exercises sovereign headship over all creation, providence, and redemption. By His mercy and grace, He decrees and sends forth the Son and the Spirit. He also hears and answers prayer, and has planned to save from eternal death all those who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, His Son. (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14-15; Psalm 110:1; John 14:26; John 14:31; Psalm 145:8-9; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 8:6, 15:24, 15:28; Hebrews 10:7).

b. *God the Son: Jesus Christ*

We believe that Jesus Christ is divine; the eternal Son of God. He is the Creator who also sustains creation by the word of His power. He is the Messiah foretold by the prophets, who brings God's Kingdom and reconciles sinners to God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and lived a sinless life. He took upon Himself full human nature, uniting divine and human natures in one Person, both natures being whole, perfect, and distinct. In the gospel message, we learn that He voluntarily suffered and died on the cross as a substitutionary, wrath-appeasing, atoning sacrifice for sin according to the will of the Father. We believe in His bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven; where He is now our interceding High Priest, Mediator, Shepherd, and King. We believe in the personal, visible return of Jesus

(Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:18-25, 3:2; Luke 24:25-27; John 1:14, 12:15; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 5:9-11; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 1:1-4, 4:14-15, 7:26-27; 1 Peter 2:24-25, 3:18; Revelation 19:16).

c. *God the Holy Spirit*

We believe that the Holy Spirit is divine. He is the Lord and Creator who was promised by Jesus to also be the Counselor and Comforter to all who follow Christ. We believe that without the Holy Spirit people would not be able to glorify God. With the Spirit, we have immense power to obey and honor the Lord. He ministers to every believer by regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, sealing, convicting, sanctifying, and empowering for life and godliness. He gives spiritual gifts to believers to glorify God and edify both the universal and local church (John 14:16-17, 15:26, 16:7-14; Acts 1:8, 5:3-4; Romans 12:3-13; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:13-14, 2:22, 4:11-12; Titus 3:5).

3. *Mankind*

- a. **Creation and Fall of Mankind:** We believe that a historical Adam and Eve were created good and originally lived in perfect communion with God. However, Adam and Eve, by voluntary transgression, sinned. Because of Adam's disobedience the entire race was alienated from God and all creation suffers from its effects. This results in not only physical, but spiritual death which is separation from God. All human beings, by physical birth, possess a sin nature and are therefore actual sinners in thought, word, and deed; and man, as such, is condemned to Hell and utterly unable to remedy his lost condition by himself. Man's only hope of redemption is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Genesis 1:26-31, 3:1-8; Romans 3:23, 5:12-21, 6:23, 8:18-23).
- b. **Mankind as Male and Female:** Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God in their persons and distinct in their genders. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and resonate in every human heart throughout all time. Ultimately, distinctions in gender display the glory of God; and in marriage, the uniting of a man and woman reveals both the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the Church and also the glorious relationship of leadership, submission, and mutual love within the Godhead.

We believe sexual relationships are to be confined and celebrated solely within the marriage covenant between one man and one woman. The principle of a male headship, which includes a unique, sacrificial and loving leadership, exhibits the character of Jesus. The principle of female submission, which comes from a desire to sacrificially love, exemplifies the church's relationship to Christ. These distinctions are intended to be applied in the family and in the church – revealing what is good, beautiful, and best for individuals and society at large (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18, 21-24; 1 Corinthians 11:2-12; Galatians. 3:28; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15).

4. *Salvation of Mankind*

- a. **The Plan of God:** We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation. We believe that

God rescues those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that He will one day glorify them. In love, God now commands and implores all people to repent and believe on Jesus (John 3:16, 6:35-40; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:5, 1:11, 2:8-9; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Revelation 5:9).

- b. **The Gospel:** We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus and it is the power of God that leads people to salvation. We believe the gospel is not proclaimed if Jesus is not proclaimed, and we believe that the authentic Jesus has not been proclaimed if His substitutionary death and resurrection are not central to the message. For the gospel to be accurate, it must be in accordance with the Scriptures, pointing people to the historical and eternal Jesus Christ who is also the Lord who reconciles sinners to God (Deuteronomy 21:23; John 20:30-31; Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6; Galatians 3:13).
- c. **Redemption in Jesus:** Jesus perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, and performed miraculous signs. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciles to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death, defeated Satan, and brings everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 27:2; John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11, 4:12; Romans 3:21-22, 5:17; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 2:1, 3:8).
- d. **Conditions of salvation:** We believe that salvation is found in no one else and nothing other than Jesus Christ. By the sovereign grace and mercy of God, Christ purchased people on the cross. When a person comes to repentant faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, apart from any work or merit, he or she receives all the promised saving benefits of God, including forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We therefore affirm that believers cannot boast in their salvation, but instead boast in Jesus Christ who has become their wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption (John 1:12; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-15; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Timothy 3:15; Titus 2:11, 3:5-7).
- e. **Justification:** When someone trusts Jesus for salvation, that person is pardoned of all their sins and declared righteous in God's sight forever. This forgiveness and righteousness comes to us not on the basis of our righteous works, because we had none. Instead, this pardon and righteousness comes because Jesus, at the cross, took the wrath of God in the place of sinners and imputed to the believer His own righteousness. Therefore, a believer is "in Christ" instead of "in Adam," being a part of a new and redeemed race (Romans 3:21-26, 4:5-8, 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- f. **Adoption:** We believe that anyone who is justified is also adopted into God's family and now possesses the rights and privileges of a child of God. Being a part of God's family ensures that a believer is included in God's kingdom, causing us to eagerly await the finalization of our adoption. We believe the doctrine of adoption reminds us that those

in God's family are loved, cherished, and delighted in by God Himself (Ephesians 4:1-5; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 8:23).

- g. Sanctification: We believe that God's salvation sets a believer free to worship God in every aspect of their lives. We also believe that God promises to cause a believer to persevere in their pursuit of God's glory in their daily life. The doctrine of sanctification teaches us that the believer is completely sanctified in this life in that he is positionally set apart unto God as a "slave of righteousness" instead of as a "slave to sin." This doctrine also teaches us that the believer will be progressively sanctified in this life as he grows in grace and is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 17:17; Romans 6:20-23, 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Peter 3:18).
- h. Glorification: We believe that the Bible guarantees a day when all who believe will behold the glory of the Lord and then experience the redemption of their bodies. The presence of sin will be eradicated at the future glorification when we behold His glory. In that day when Jesus returns, those people whom Jesus has saved will finally be completely free from all of sin's destructive effects (Romans 8:17, 23-30; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 1 John 3:1-3).

5. *Baptism*

We believe that the ordinance of water baptism is an act of obedience instituted by Jesus Christ. Baptism should be observed solely by all who are true believers in Christ. As a church family, our common practice is baptism by immersion. Baptism testifies to our union with Jesus and to our reconciled relationship with our Triune God. Baptism speaks to one's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and confesses one's death to sin and newness of life. We also believe that baptism confesses one's spiritual entrance and union with the universal church, which is also referred to as Christ's body (Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Peter 3:21).

6. *The Lord's Supper*

We believe that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper consists of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine. The physical elements of food remind us that Jesus is our eternal sustenance and hope. The Lord's Supper is (1) a continuing rehearsal of being a part of God's new covenant on the basis of Jesus and not ourselves, (2) a memorial of his suffering and death, and (3) an anticipation of Jesus and His Kingdom to come. It is to be enjoyed by all repenting believers until Jesus comes (Luke 22:19-20; John 6:48-58; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

7. *The Church*

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head. Every believer is born again and baptized by the Holy Spirit into this body; thus being children of God, citizens of God's Kingdom, and members of God's universal church. The universal body of Christ is organized into local assemblies composed of professing believers in Jesus Christ who seek to pursue Jesus together as disciple-making disciples. Since Jesus is the Lord and Savior of His church, we believe that a truly Christian church centers its pursuit of life and godliness

on Jesus Himself. This committed assembly associates together in order to exalt God, edify His church, and evangelize the world. Members of a local church are called to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and to love one another sacrificially and fervently (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22, 4:2-3; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 10:23-25).

- a. Exalting God – Worship is humbly entering into the presence of God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, guided by the Word, for the purpose of reverencing and adoring the supreme value and beauty of God. We worship through song, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, communion, service, giving, fellowship, evangelism, and the Word (Psalm 95:1-7, 96:1-13; Matthew 4:10; John 4:24; Ephesians 5:19-20; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:19-22; Revelation 4:9-11).
- b. Edifying His Church – We are called to build one another up in our pursuit of Jesus through mutual partnership and fellowship with other genuine believers. As a part of this fellowship, we believe that discipleship is vital. Discipleship is helping other believers follow Christ more closely and grow in Christ more deeply. It involves teaching the Word, modeling Christ-like behavior and spiritual disciplines, and practicing church discipline, when necessary (Matthew 18:15-17, 28:19-20; Acts 2:42,46-47; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 John 1:3).
- c. Evangelizing the world – Evangelism is the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus Christ gave the “Great Commission” to his disciples, and as His followers, He has sent us out into the world to be His ambassadors and witnesses. We are called and privileged to love our neighbors, to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and to proclaim the praises of God to the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 12:31, 16:15; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

8. *The End Times*

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will return, appearing in the sky and bringing final retribution. The dead in Christ will rise first, and the remaining believers will be caught up together with them to meet Him in the air. When Jesus returns, he will gather together his one bride, the Church, consisting of Jews and Gentiles alike. We affirm that there will be a judgment day when the Lord justly judges every human being who ever lived. The wicked will be condemned to eternal, conscious punishment and death in the Lake of Fire; and the righteous will live forever with God in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled, and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new (Romans 8:23, 11:1-32; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 19, 20, 21).