

# What We Believe And Teach

At For His Glory Community Church



FOR HIS GLORY  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

*(draft: October 28, 2017)*

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# 1. Acknowledgement To Bethlehem Baptist Church of Minnesota

We owe a great debt to the pastors and elders at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minnesota. When the elders at For His Glory Community church felt lead to provide a more robust statement of what we believe and teach, we needed help. We needed a starting point. After looking at many documents that convey theological clarity, we found the Elder Affirmation of Faith statement at Bethlehem Baptist Church to be both most helpful and most aligned with our own beliefs. As such, we have used that document, the Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith statement (<https://bethlehem.church/elder-affirmation-of-faith>), as the basis for this document. In particular, sections 5 through 18 are almost verbatim from Bethlehem Baptist Church. Where changes are made, which are very few, they reflect the convictions of For His Glory Community Church solely.

With that said, we praise Jesus, Who ever builds His church, for the labor of Bethlehem Baptist Church for their Elder Affirmation of Faith.

## 2. Purpose Of This Document

What purpose does this document serve in the life of the church at For His Glory Community Church? That is a question the elders labored over as we sought theological clarity. Not only was our concern the “what” of what we believe and teach, but we struggled over the “why” of our belief. That is, why have this document? What good is it? In what way does it help us in the pilgrim's journey of faith God calls us to as a local congregation? To that end, after much prayer and discussion, we concluded the following purposes for this document:

- 2.1. This document serves to separate the essential doctrines we believe are required to be considered historical and orthodox in the Christian faith (section “Statement of Faith”) from what we believe is the theological unity of the congregation at For His Glory Community Church. We make this distinction because we believe that it is important to affirm the catholic (lower case ‘c’, meaning ‘universal’) faith to which we belong, while being clear in the convictions and distinctiveness of who we are as a local church. We neither want to collapse all our theological convictions into the realm of “what is a Christian” nor do we want to convey that minimal theological agreement is what most benefits the life of a local church.
- 2.2. This document serves to provide clarity in what discipleship looks like, theologically, at

For His Glory Community Church. That is, those who attend For His Glory Community Church can trust the teaching of this church, from children to adult, will be in accord with this document, as best as possible. In addition to providing “guard rails” to what is taught at For His Glory Community Church, this document acts as a goal. Our aim is that all members of For His Glory Community Church will learn, embrace, and believe the truths described herein, for the good of their faith and for the glory of their Lord.

- 2.3. This document serves to bring unity at For His Glory Community Church. Properly used, this document will give room for both gracious freedom in differing, while sustaining clarity of theological convictions. To that end, we believe the following matrix of persons to type of affirmation makes most sense for the unity of God’s people at For His Glory Community Church:

<b>Member / Role</b>	<b>Level of Affirmation</b>
<i>To be an attendee</i>	Do not be divisive. Understand that For His Glory Community Church is committed to upholding and teaching what is in this document and do not be divisive in that endeavor.
<i>To be a member / to serve</i>	In addition to the above, have an openness to the convictions conveyed in this document. Be open to the trajectory, as set in this document, to the ministry of the Word at For His Glory Community Church. Be willing to discuss why one differs with various points, if any, within this document.
<i>To be a teacher of God’s Word</i>	In addition to the above, be charitable in teaching in accord with this document. By this, we mean that one can honestly differ and still teach an aspect of doctrine as “this is what we hold to and believe at For His Glory Community Church,” and one can do so in a way that speaks well of the conviction one differs with.
<i>To be a ministry leader</i>	In addition to the above, believe that the convictions within this document are feasible, probable, and likely. Ministry leaders will

	positively hold to the convictions within this document, even though at some points it may be “loosely” held for a season.
<i>To be an elder</i>	In addition to the above, all elders/pastors will fully affirm what is contained within this document.

In pursuing unity in the universal church, we believe there must be theological unity at the local church level. Our prayer is this matrix of affirmation (described above) will produce in For His Glory Community Church both graciousness and clarity.

### 3. The Spirit of This Affirmation and the Unity of the Church

- 3.1. We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved, except for the section “What Makes A Christian.”
- 3.2. Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach “the whole counsel of God.”<sup>1</sup> Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fulness of its truth,<sup>2</sup> and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion<sup>3</sup> and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by God-centered doctrine.<sup>4</sup> And we believe that a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.3. We believe that the cause of unity in the church<sup>6</sup> is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value

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1 Acts 20:27  
2 Titus 1:1; 1 Timothy 4:1; 6:3-5  
3 Ephesians 4:13-14  
4 1 Timothy 1:5  
5 Psalm 9:10  
6 Ephesians 4:4-6

of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other<sup>7</sup> across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders.

- 3.4. We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.<sup>9</sup> As conversation and debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship.

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<sup>7</sup> John 13:34-35

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Peter 3:18

<sup>9</sup> Acts 17:11

# 4. Statement Of Faith: What Makes A Christian

We believe the following truths, declared as our Statement of faith, to rightly define what has been historically known, declared, and believed to define the belief of an authentic follower of Jesus Christ. These beliefs are a small subset of the sections that follow in the rest of the document.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

### Our Belief About the Word Of God

We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, act as the authority in all matters of faith and conduct, and is true and sufficient. (*Psalm 19:17-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21*)

### Our Belief About God

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; that this triune God created all, upholds all, and governs all things. (*Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Hebrews 9:14*)

We believe in the person of God the Father, an Infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love; that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men; that He hears and answers prayer; and that He saves from sin and death all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (*Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalms 90:2; Psalms 102:27; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Titus 1:3*)

We believe in the person of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings, his substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people and personal, visible return to earth. (*Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Mark 16:19; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-2; John 8:58; John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 1:2; Revelation 1:8*) We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit, Who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower for ministry all who believe in Christ. We believe the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide. (*Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 3:18; John 16:8-11; Romans 15:13,16; Hebrews 9:14; John 14:16-17, 16:8-11*)

### Our Belief About Man

We believe that all people are created by God in His own image; that when Adam sinned, all of humanity was subjugated to physical, spiritual and eternal death, which is separation from God; that as a consequence, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners by choice and therefore under condemnation. (*Acts 8:15-17; Titus 3:5*)

We believe that no person will inherit eternal life on the basis of human merit or works; that in order for a person to be saved, a person must be regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit,

repent from sins, and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. (*John 3:3-7; Rom 3:23-26; Rom 10:9-10*)

### **Our Belief About The Church**

We believe in the universal church, the living spiritual body, of which Christ is the head and all who are born again are members. (*1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 4:15-16*)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to the church: (a) baptism and (b) the Lord's Supper. (*Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*)

### **Our Belief About Last Things**

We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ which is His personal, visible return to earth and the establishment of His kingdom, in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment the righteous and the wicked. (*Matthew 16:27; Acts 1:11; Rev. 19:11-16, 20:11-15*)

We believe in Heaven and in Hell and that all those who place their faith, hope and trust in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in Heaven with the Lord, while those who reject Jesus' free gift of salvation will spend eternity separated from the Lord. (*Matthew 5:3, 25:31-34; Hebrews 12:23; 1 Peter 1:4; Psalm 9:17; Matthew 5:22, 18:9; Luke 12:5*)



## 5. What We Teach About Scripture, the Word of God Written

- 5.1. We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God,<sup>10</sup> and without error<sup>11</sup> in the original manuscripts.
- 5.2. We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right, and what is good. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true, right, and good is assessed by criteria and wisdom consistent with the teachings of Scripture.
- 5.3. We believe God's revelatory intentions are perfectly communicated through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the authors' intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware, as, for example, in the case of some Old Testament prophecies.<sup>12</sup> God in his wisdom and grace choose this mode of communication: that His divine revelation would be written in human words. Thus the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. However, while meaning does not change, the application of that meaning may change in various situations. Nevertheless it is not legitimate to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired.<sup>13</sup>
- 5.4. Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible (which is its fullest meaning) is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. Limited abilities, traditional biases, personal sin, and cultural assumptions often obscure Biblical texts. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible,<sup>14</sup> and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; Matthew 22:43-44; John 14:26; 16:13-14  
<sup>11</sup> Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 12:6; Hebrews 6:18; Matthew 22:29; 24:35; Titus 1:2; John 17:17.  
<sup>12</sup> 1 Peter 1:10-11; John 11:51  
<sup>13</sup> 2 Peter 3:16; Matthew 4:6-7  
<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:12-16  
<sup>15</sup> Psalm 119:12, 18; Ephesians 1:18

## 6. What We Teach About The Trinity, One God as Three Persons

- 6.1. We believe in one<sup>16</sup> living<sup>17</sup>, sovereign<sup>18</sup>, and all-glorious<sup>19</sup> God, eternally existing in three<sup>20</sup> infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the Father,<sup>21</sup> from whom all things begin;<sup>22</sup> God the Son,<sup>23</sup> eternally begotten,<sup>24</sup> not made, without beginning,<sup>25</sup> being of one essence<sup>26</sup> with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence,<sup>27</sup> as a Person,<sup>28</sup> eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each Person in the Godhead is fully and completely God.
- 6.2. We believe that this God is self-existent and self-sufficient<sup>29</sup> as He engages within triune community.<sup>30</sup> He is beyond, acting within, and unchanged by time<sup>31</sup> while being present everywhere<sup>32</sup> and knowing all things.<sup>33</sup> He is sovereign over all of his creation<sup>34</sup> and intimately satisfying to his creatures.<sup>35</sup> He is gracious, merciful,<sup>36</sup> and slow to anger<sup>37</sup>, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty,<sup>38</sup> for he is just, holy, righteous, and good.<sup>39</sup>
- 6.3. We believe that God is supremely joyful<sup>40</sup> in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying

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<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 16:16; see also 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; Revelation 7:2

<sup>18</sup> Job 42:2; Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:25, 34-35; Ephesians 1:11; James 4:15; See notes 29, 31-36, 45, 46.

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 138:5

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>21</sup> John 1:18; 5:18; 6:46; 20:17; Acts 2:33; Romans 1:7; 15:6; 1 Peter 1:3; Philemon 1:3

<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:6

<sup>23</sup> John 20:31; 1:1-3; 5:18; 6:46; 10:38; 12:45; 14:7; Matthew 1:23; 11:27; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13;

Hebrews 1:3,8; 2 Peter 1:1; Revelation 22:13

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:5-6; John 1:14, 18

<sup>25</sup> John 1:1

<sup>26</sup> Colossians 2:9; (ὁμοούσιος).

<sup>27</sup> Acts 5:3-41; Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Romans 8:27

<sup>28</sup> John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:30

<sup>29</sup> Acts 17:24-25; Exodus 3:14; Psalm 90:2; Romans 1:18-20.

<sup>30</sup> Isaiah 43:10; John 17:20-26; 20:17, 28; Acts 5:3-5.

<sup>31</sup> Psalm 102:25-27; Hebrews 1:10-12; Isaiah 46:9-10; Revelation 1:8.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Chronicles 6:18; Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24.

<sup>33</sup> Isaiah 40:27-28; 46:10; 55:8-9; Psalm 139:1-4; Matthew 11:21.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel 4:34-35; Isaiah 46:8-10; Ephesians 1:11.

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 16:11; 63:1-5; Ecclesiastes 1:14; John 10:10.

<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel 16; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:3-12; 2:8-10.

<sup>37</sup> Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; 103:8

<sup>38</sup> Exodus 34:6-7; Numbers 14:18

<sup>39</sup> Deuteronomy 32:1-4; Isaiah 6:1-4; 1 Peter 1:16

<sup>40</sup> 1 Timothy 1:11; Matthew 25:23; John 17:26; Matthew 12:18; Proverbs 8:27-30

perfections of the triune God.

## 7. What We Teach About God's Eternal Plan and Election

- 7.1. We believe that God has an eternal<sup>41</sup> and unthwartable<sup>42</sup> plan that He enacts by the most wise and holy counsel of His will,<sup>43</sup> in which he ordains,<sup>44</sup> foreknows,<sup>45</sup> and transforms<sup>46</sup> whatever comes to pass, in order to display the fullest extent of his glory<sup>47</sup> and secure the ever-increasing enjoyment<sup>48</sup> of all who love Him.<sup>49</sup>
- 7.2. We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies<sup>50</sup> to subatomic particles,<sup>51</sup> from the forces of nature<sup>52</sup> to the movements of nations,<sup>53</sup> and from the public plans of politicians<sup>54</sup> to the secret acts of solitary persons<sup>55</sup>– all in accord with His eternal, all-wise<sup>56</sup> plan to glorify Himself. He does this in such a way that He never sins, nor is the author of evil.<sup>57</sup> He never condemns a person unjustly,<sup>58</sup> but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability<sup>59</sup> of all persons created in His image.
- 7.3. We believe that God's election is an unconditional<sup>60</sup> act of free grace<sup>61</sup> which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began.<sup>62</sup> By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin<sup>63</sup> and brought

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<sup>41</sup> 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 3:11; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8

<sup>42</sup> Hebrews 6:17; Acts 2:23-24; Isaiah 46:10; Job 42:2.

<sup>43</sup> Ephesians 1:11

<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 46:9-10; Proverbs 16:33; Proverbs 19:21

<sup>45</sup> Isaiah 41:21-23; 42:8-9; see also Genesis 15:13; 40:13,19; Exodus 3:19; Deuteronomy 31:16; Psalm 34:20; Isaiah 44:6-8; 44:24-28; 45:11; 45:20-21; 46:8-11; 48:1-6; Zechariah 12:10; John 6:64; 19:36-37).

<sup>46</sup> Romans 8:28; Psalm 41:1-3; 1 Peter 5:10; Revelation 21:5.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 11:36; see also Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14; Isaiah 60:21; see also 43:7; John 12:27-28; John 17:1; John 17:4; Philippians 2:11

<sup>48</sup> Psalm 37:4; Philippians 4:4; Matthew 25:23; Revelation 21:4

<sup>49</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9; Romans 8:28

<sup>50</sup> Job 9:7; Isaiah 40:26

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 10:29-30; Colossians 1:16-17

<sup>52</sup> Job 37:6-13; Psalm 147:15-18; Mark 4:39-41

<sup>53</sup> Psalm 33:10-11; Amos 3:6; Lamentations 3:37-38; Genesis 50:20

<sup>54</sup> Revelation 17:16-17; Proverbs 21:1; 16:33

<sup>55</sup> Proverbs 20:24; 16:9

<sup>56</sup> Psalm 104:24; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:21

<sup>57</sup> Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 John 1:5; James 1:13; Romans 3:4

<sup>58</sup> Romans 1:20; 2:11-12; Daniel 4:37

<sup>59</sup> Romans 3:19

<sup>60</sup> Romans 9:11-18; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; John 10:25-29; 17:6; 6:37-39; Romans 8:28-30

<sup>61</sup> Romans 11:5-8

<sup>62</sup> 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4.

<sup>63</sup> Romans 6:17; 8:2

to repentance<sup>64</sup> and saving faith<sup>65</sup> in His Son Christ Jesus.

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<sup>64</sup> 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Acts 11:18

<sup>65</sup> John 6:44; 6:65; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:27; 16:17; Acts 16:14

## 8. What We Teach About God's Creation of the Universe and Man

- 8.1. We believe that God created the universe,<sup>66</sup> and everything in it,<sup>67</sup> out of nothing,<sup>68</sup> by His Word. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency,<sup>69</sup> God was pleased in creation to display His glory<sup>70</sup> for the everlasting joy<sup>71</sup> of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.<sup>72</sup>
- 8.2. We believe that God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race;<sup>73</sup> that they were created male and female equally in the image of God,<sup>74</sup> without sin;<sup>75</sup> that they were created to glorify<sup>76</sup> their Maker, Ruler, Provider, and Friend by trusting His all-sufficient goodness, admiring His infinite beauty, enjoying His personal fellowship, and obeying His all-wise counsel; and that, in God's love and wisdom, they were appointed differing and complementary roles in marriage as a type of Christ and the church.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>

Genesis 1:1

<sup>67</sup>

Psalm 24:1-2

<sup>68</sup>

Hebrews 11:3; 1:2; John 1:1-3

<sup>69</sup>

See note 22. Exodus 3:13-14; Psalm 50:9-15; Acts 17:25

<sup>70</sup>

Isaiah 43:7

<sup>71</sup>

Isaiah 35:10; Matthew 25:23

<sup>72</sup>

Revelation 5:9; 7:9-10.

<sup>73</sup>

Genesis 2:7; 1:27; 2:21-22; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 15:45; Romans 5:14

<sup>74</sup>

Genesis 1:27; Genesis 9:6; James 3:9

<sup>75</sup>

Genesis 1:31

<sup>76</sup>

See note 63.

<sup>77</sup>

Ephesians 5:22-33; Genesis 2:18

## 9. What We Teach About Man's Sin and Fall from Fellowship with God

- 9.1. We believe that, although God created man morally upright, he was led astray from God's Word and wisdom by the subtlety of Satan's deceit,<sup>78</sup> and chose to take what was forbidden,<sup>79</sup> and thus declare his independence from, distrust for, and disobedience toward his all-good and gracious Creator. Thus, our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original innocence and communion with God.<sup>80</sup>
- 9.2. We believe that, as the head of the human race, Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, in such a way that corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person.<sup>81</sup> All persons are thus corrupt by nature,<sup>82</sup> enslaved to sin,<sup>83</sup> and morally unable<sup>84</sup> to delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule.
- 9.3. We believe God has subjected the creation to futility,<sup>85</sup> and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness,<sup>86</sup> decay,<sup>87</sup> calamity,<sup>88</sup> and loss.<sup>89</sup> Thus all the adversity and suffering in the world is an echo and a witness of the exceedingly great evil of moral depravity in the heart of mankind; and every new day of life is a God-given, merciful reprieve from imminent judgment, pointing to repentance.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 3:1; 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3

<sup>79</sup> Genesis 2:17; 3:6.

<sup>80</sup> Genesis 3:7-8; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21

<sup>81</sup> Romans 5:12-19.

<sup>82</sup> Ephesians 2:2-3.

<sup>83</sup> Romans 6:16, 20.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7-8; Deuteronomy 29:4

<sup>85</sup> Romans 8:20

<sup>86</sup> Romans 8:23

<sup>87</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:16

<sup>88</sup> Romans 8:35-36

<sup>89</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13

<sup>90</sup> Romans 2:4

# 10. What We Teach About Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

- 10.1. We believe that in the fullness of time,<sup>91</sup> God sent forth His eternal Son, Jesus the Messiah,<sup>92</sup> conceived by the Holy Spirit,<sup>93</sup> born of the virgin Mary.<sup>94</sup> We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh,<sup>95</sup> He took on a fully human nature,<sup>96</sup> so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion, mixture, change, or division. Thus the Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God<sup>97</sup> and truly man,<sup>98</sup> yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man.<sup>99</sup> Through the incarnation, Jesus was God's divine Word spoken in human words; Jesus is who God is.<sup>100</sup>
- 10.2. We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He truly experienced the common infirmities and temptations of human life.<sup>101</sup> He grew up<sup>102</sup>, grew tired,<sup>103</sup> got thirsty<sup>104</sup> and hungry.<sup>105</sup> He became physically weak,<sup>106</sup> and even died a distinctly human death.<sup>107</sup> Yet, he preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history.<sup>108</sup> He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation: dispatching demons,<sup>109</sup> healing the sick,<sup>110</sup> raising the dead,<sup>111</sup> and calming the storm, among others.<sup>112</sup>
- 10.3. We believe that His life was governed by His Father's providence with a view to fulfilling all Old Testament prophecies concerning the One who was to come,<sup>113</sup> such as the Seed of

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<sup>91</sup> Galatians 4:4.  
<sup>92</sup> John 3:16-17; Matthew 16:16  
<sup>93</sup> Luke 1:34-35  
<sup>94</sup> Matthew 1:23; see also Luke 1:34-35  
<sup>95</sup> John 1:14  
<sup>96</sup> Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:17  
<sup>97</sup> See note 17.  
<sup>98</sup> Philippians 2:6-8; see notes 86 and 87.  
<sup>99</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5  
<sup>100</sup> John 1:1-18; Hebrews 1:1-3  
<sup>101</sup> Hebrews 4:15  
<sup>102</sup> Luke 2:40, 52  
<sup>103</sup> John 4:6  
<sup>104</sup> John 19:28  
<sup>105</sup> Matthew 4:2  
<sup>106</sup> Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26  
<sup>107</sup> Luke 23:46  
<sup>108</sup> John 7:46; Mark 1:27  
<sup>109</sup> Mark 1:27  
<sup>110</sup> Matthew 4:23  
<sup>111</sup> Matthew 11:4-6  
<sup>112</sup> Mark 4:39  
<sup>113</sup> Luke 24:25-26

- the woman,<sup>114</sup> the Prophet like Moses,<sup>115</sup> the Priest after the order of Melchizedek,<sup>116</sup> the Son of David,<sup>117</sup> and the Suffering Servant.<sup>118</sup>
- 10.4. We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily<sup>119</sup> in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.<sup>120</sup> He was crucified under Pontius Pilate,<sup>121</sup> He died,<sup>122</sup> was buried<sup>123</sup> and on the third day rose from the dead<sup>124</sup> to vindicate the saving work of His life and death<sup>125</sup> and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory.<sup>126</sup> During the forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection<sup>127</sup> and then ascended bodily into heaven,<sup>128</sup> where He is seated at the right hand of the Father,<sup>129</sup> interceding for His people<sup>130</sup> on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20  
<sup>115</sup> Deuteronomy 18:18; Acts 3:20-23  
<sup>116</sup> Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:5-6  
<sup>117</sup> Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 1:1; 22:42  
<sup>118</sup> Isaiah 52:13; 53:3-6; Mark 10:45  
<sup>119</sup> John 10:18  
<sup>120</sup> Acts 2:23  
<sup>121</sup> Acts 4:27-28  
<sup>122</sup> John 19:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3  
<sup>123</sup> John 19:40-41; 1 Corinthians 15:4  
<sup>124</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:4; Matthew 28:6  
<sup>125</sup> Romans 4:25  
<sup>126</sup> Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 17:31  
<sup>127</sup> Acts 1:3  
<sup>128</sup> Acts 1:9-11  
<sup>129</sup> Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33; 5:31; Colossians 3:1  
<sup>130</sup> Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14; 1 John 2:1  
<sup>131</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13



# 11. What We Teach About The Saving Work of Christ

- 11.1. We believe that Jesus' faithfulness to the will of the Father,<sup>132</sup> is demonstrated in his becoming a Man like us, experiencing suffering and death-the curse begot by sin.<sup>133</sup> This work secured the wholeness of true life<sup>134</sup> and true relationship in God<sup>135</sup> through the forgiveness of sins<sup>136</sup> and the gift of righteousness, for all who trusted in God prior to the cross<sup>137</sup> and all who would trust in Christ thereafter.<sup>138</sup> In the death of Christ, the effects of our curse are absorbed as Jesus makes it his own,<sup>139</sup> and in doing so, he has removed the cause of wrath against us.<sup>140</sup> Triumphant over sin and evil,<sup>141</sup> Jesus has justified us and displayed the righteousness of God,<sup>142</sup> his covenantal faithfulness, to his people for salvation.
- 11.2. We believe that the atonement of Christ for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all persons, so that to every person it may be truly said, "God gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life."<sup>143</sup> God does not show partiality to anyone; Jesus is good news for all of creation.<sup>144</sup> Whosoever will come may come for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come to kneel in worship, Jesus will not cast out. Whosoever will come may come,<sup>145</sup> and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out,<sup>146</sup> but will purify them, and they will kneel in joyous worship.
- 11.3. We believe that the work of Christ does not merely present an opportunity for salvation, nor does it allow a possibility for indifference. Christ's work actually does something. First, Jesus is the returning King of his creation. On the cross and through his resurrection,

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<sup>132</sup> Romans 5:18-19

<sup>133</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 3:23-25; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Romans 5:6; 8:34; 14:9; Galatians 2:21; Genesis 3:3.

<sup>134</sup> John 10:10; Ephesians 2:5.

<sup>135</sup> Ephesians 2:11-22.

<sup>136</sup> Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Acts 13:38

<sup>137</sup> Romans 4:3; 3:25-26

<sup>138</sup> Romans 3:26- 18; Galatians 2:16

<sup>139</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 4:4; Romans 8:1, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Ephesians 2:3-6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9. Colossians 2:13-14;

<sup>141</sup> Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

<sup>142</sup> Romans 3:25-26

<sup>143</sup> John 3:16; Matthew 28:19 ; Colossians 1:23; Acts 1:8

<sup>144</sup> Romans 2:11; 8:18-25; Ephesians 6:9; Acts 10:34

<sup>145</sup> Revelation 22:17, KJV; John 4:14

<sup>146</sup> John 6:37

he disarmed his enemies and defeated death itself, thus securing his kingship.<sup>147</sup> Jesus is king, and in either joyous worship or conquered disdain, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.<sup>148</sup> Second, Jesus expresses a special covenant love to His friends,<sup>149</sup> His sheep,<sup>150</sup> His bride<sup>151</sup> by definitely rescuing them from death and giving them new life.<sup>152</sup> This effectual work brought to fruition by the Holy Spirit who triumphs over their resistance to bring them to saving faith in Christ.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

<sup>148</sup> Philippians 2:9-11;

<sup>149</sup> John 15:13

<sup>150</sup> John 10:14-15

<sup>151</sup> Ephesians 5:25

<sup>152</sup> Ephesians 2:1-10.

<sup>153</sup> Revelation 5:9; John 17:6, 9, 19; 11:51-52; Romans 8:32

## 12. What We Teach About The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

- 12.1. We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation,<sup>154</sup> awakening faith in the remnant of God's people,<sup>155</sup> performing signs and wonders,<sup>156</sup> giving triumphs in battle,<sup>157</sup> empowering the preaching of prophets<sup>158</sup> and inspiring the writing of Scripture.<sup>159</sup> Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He inaugurated a new era of the Spirit by pouring out the promise of the Father on His Church.<sup>160</sup>
- 12.2. We believe that the newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ.<sup>161</sup> This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ,<sup>162</sup> by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe,<sup>163</sup> by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory,<sup>164</sup> by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts (being sovereignly free to dispense those gifts as he wills) for the upbuilding of the body of Christ<sup>165</sup> and the confirmation of His Word,<sup>166</sup> by calling all the nations into the gospel of Christ,<sup>167</sup> and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people<sup>168</sup> for the everlasting dwelling of God.<sup>169</sup>
- 12.3. We believe that apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith,<sup>170</sup> because all are dead in trespasses and sins;<sup>171</sup> that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him,<sup>172</sup> because the pleasures of sin appear greater than

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<sup>154</sup> Psalm 104:30; Gen. 1:2

<sup>155</sup> Romans 8:7-9

<sup>156</sup> Judges 14:6

<sup>157</sup> Judges 3:10

<sup>158</sup> 1 Samuel 10:6

<sup>159</sup> 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 22:43, referring to Psalm 110:1. See note 1.

<sup>160</sup> Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33

<sup>161</sup> John 16:13-14; 7:39

<sup>162</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>163</sup> Romans 15:18-19; Acts 16:14; John 3:8

<sup>164</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

<sup>165</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 2:4

<sup>166</sup> Hebrews 2:3-4

<sup>167</sup> Acts 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Romans 15:18-19; Acts 13:2; 4:31

<sup>168</sup> Jeremiah 31:33-34; 32:40

<sup>169</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21

<sup>170</sup> See notes 43 and 44.

<sup>171</sup> Ephesians 2:4-6

<sup>172</sup> Romans 8:7-8

the pleasures of God.<sup>173</sup> Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance,<sup>174</sup> wakens the dead,<sup>175</sup> removes blindness,<sup>176</sup> and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful and truly experiential way, that Jesus becomes irresistibly attractive to the newly-regenerate heart.

- 12.4. We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of Christ.<sup>177</sup> Thus, neither the work of the Father in election, nor the work of the Son in atonement, nor the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a hindrance or discouragement to the proclamation of the gospel to all peoples and persons everywhere. On the contrary, this divine saving work of the Trinity is the warrant and the ground of our hope that our evangelization is not in vain in the Lord. The Spirit binds His saving work to the gospel of Christ, because His aim is to glorify the Christ of the Gospel.<sup>178</sup> Therefore we do not believe that there is salvation through any other means than through receiving the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>173</sup>

Mark 4:19

<sup>174</sup>

Romans 6:17; 8:7-9

<sup>175</sup>

See note 147.

<sup>176</sup>

2 Corinthians 4:4-6

<sup>177</sup>

Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4, 6

<sup>178</sup>

John 16:14

<sup>179</sup>

Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 3:19-22; 1:5; 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:6; Romans 1:5; Acts 17:30-31

# 13. What We Teach About The Justifying Act of God

- 13.1. We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works,<sup>180</sup> pardoning their sins,<sup>181</sup> and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence.<sup>182</sup> Faith is thus the sole instrument<sup>183</sup> by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ and reconciled to the Father.<sup>184</sup> This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification.<sup>185</sup> Thus the righteousness by which we come into renewed relationship with God is not anything worked in us by God over time, nor imparted to us at baptism, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us.
- 13.2. We believe, nevertheless, that true faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces the fruit of love<sup>186</sup> by the Holy Spirit,<sup>187</sup> and leads necessarily to sanctification.<sup>188</sup> This necessary relation between true justifying faith and the fruit of good works gives rise to some Biblical expressions which seem to make works the ground or means of justification,<sup>189</sup> but in fact simply express the crucial truth that faith that does not yield the fruit of good works is dead, being no true faith.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Titus 3:5-7; Romans 3:28; 3:23-24; 4:4-5; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:24; 5:4. Philippians 3:8-9

<sup>181</sup> Romans 4:6-8

<sup>182</sup> See note 113.

<sup>183</sup> Romans 4:4-5; See note 157.

<sup>184</sup> Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Jeremiah 23:5-6

<sup>185</sup> Romans 5:1

<sup>186</sup> Galatians 5:6; 1 Timothy 1:5; Colossians 1:4-5; 1 John 3:14; 4:8, 16, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>188</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 15:9; 26:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; see also 1 Thessalonians 1:3; James 2:17, 26; 1 John 2:3-4; 5:1.

<sup>189</sup> Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:13-14; Galatians 5:21; 6:8-9; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 18:34-35; James 2:21-25

<sup>190</sup> James 2:17-20, 26

# 14. What We Teach About God's Work in Faith and Sanctification

- 14.1. We believe that justification and sanctification are both brought about by God through faith,<sup>191</sup> but not in the same way. Justification is an act of God's imputing and reckoning;<sup>192</sup> sanctification is an act of God's imparting and transforming.<sup>193</sup> In other words, if Justification is the legal way to talk about coming to life, then sanctification is the process by which the Spirit teaches his people how to live. Thus, the function of faith in regard to each is different. In regard to justification, faith is not the channel through which power or transformation flows to the soul of the believer, but rather faith is the occasion of God's forgiving, acquitting, and reckoning as righteous.<sup>194</sup> But in regard to sanctification, faith is indeed the prerequisite to God's work in transforming the believer into the image and likeness of Christ.<sup>195</sup>
- 14.2. We believe that the reason justifying faith necessarily sanctifies in this way is fourfold:
- 14.2.1. *First*, justifying faith is a persevering, that is, continuing, kind of faith.<sup>196</sup> Even though we are justified at the first instant of saving faith,<sup>197</sup> yet this faith justifies only because it is the kind of faith that will surely persevere. The extension of this faith into the future is, as it were, contained in the first seed of faith, as the oak in the acorn. Thus the moral effects<sup>198</sup> of persevering faith may be rightly described as the effects of justifying faith.
- 14.2.2. *Second*, we believe that justifying faith trusts in Christ not only for the gift of imputed righteousness and the forgiveness of sins,<sup>199</sup> but also for the fulfillment of all His promises to us based on that reconciliation.<sup>200</sup> Justifying faith magnifies the finished work of Christ's atonement, by resting securely in all the promises of God obtained and guaranteed by that all-sufficient work.<sup>201</sup>
- 14.2.3. *Third*, we believe that justifying faith embraces Christ in all His roles:<sup>202</sup> Creator,<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Acts 26:18; Acts 15:9. See note 181.

<sup>192</sup> Romans 4:3-5; Luke 7:29-35; 16:15

<sup>193</sup> 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 4:7; Romans 6:19, 22

<sup>194</sup> Galatians 3:5. See notes 159 and 162.

<sup>195</sup> Romans 8:30; John 14:8;

<sup>196</sup> 1 John 2:19; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-13; Romans 4:3 = Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:19-22 = Genesis 17:17; James 2:21-23 = Genesis 22:10

<sup>197</sup> Romans 5:1

<sup>198</sup> See note 180 and 181.

<sup>199</sup> Philippians 3:9; 3:21-22; Acts 10:43

<sup>200</sup> Romans 4:20-22; 6:8; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 11:1; 3:6 1 Timothy 1:16

<sup>201</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:20

<sup>202</sup> Romans 10:9; 1 John 3:23; Acts 20:21; Galatians 2:16; Colossians 1:4; 2:5; 2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:31; Philippians

1:29

Sustainer,<sup>204</sup> Savior,<sup>205</sup> Teacher,<sup>206</sup> Guide,<sup>207</sup> Comforter,<sup>208</sup> Helper,<sup>209</sup> Friend,<sup>210</sup> Advocate,<sup>211</sup> Protector,<sup>212</sup> and Lord.<sup>213</sup> Justifying faith does not divide Christ, accepting part of Him and rejecting the rest. All of Christ is embraced by justifying faith, even before we are fully aware of, or fully understand, all that He will be for us. As more of Christ is truly revealed to us in His Word, genuine faith recognizes Christ and embraces Him more fully.<sup>214</sup>

14.2.4. *Fourth*, we believe that this embracing of all of Christ is not a mere intellectual assent, or a mere decision of the will, but is experiential. Although imperfect due to our sinful nature, this faith is a heartfelt, Spirit-given satisfaction in all that God is for us in Jesus.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, the change of mind and heart that turns from the moral ugliness and danger of sin, and is sometimes called “repentance,”<sup>216</sup> is included in the very nature of saving faith.

14.3. We believe that this persevering, future-oriented, Christ-embracing, heart-satisfying faith is life-transforming,<sup>217</sup> and therefore renders intelligible the teaching of the Scripture that final salvation in the age to come depends on the transformation of life,<sup>218</sup> and yet does not contradict justification by faith alone. The faith which alone justifies, cannot remain alone, but manifests in love.<sup>219</sup>

14.4. We believe that this simple, powerful reality of justifying faith is God’s gift<sup>220</sup> which He gives unconditionally in accord with God’s electing love,<sup>221</sup> so that no one can boast in himself,<sup>222</sup> but only give all glory to God for every part of salvation.<sup>223</sup> We believe that the Holy Spirit is the decisive agent in this life-transformation, but that He is supplied to us and works holiness in us through our daily faith in the Son of God<sup>224</sup> whose

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203 John 1:1-3  
 204 Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3  
 205 Luke 2:11  
 206 John 13:13  
 207 Acts 16:7  
 208 John 14:18; John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 1:5  
 209 Philippians 1:19  
 210 John 15:13-15  
 211 1 John 2:1  
 212 2 Thessalonians 3:3  
 213 Romans 10:9  
 214 Philippians 3:15  
 215 John 6:35; 3:19-21; 1 John 5:1-4; Hebrews 11:1,24-26.  
 216 Matthew 3:8; Hebrews 6:1  
 217 See note 180 and 181.  
 218 Romans 5:1; see note 180;  
 219 See note 180 and 181.  
 220 See notes 55 and 56.  
 221 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 8:29-30  
 222 Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.  
 223 Romans 15:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 15:10; 4:7; Hebrews 13:21; Romans 11:36  
 224 Galatians 3:5

- trustworthiness He loves to glorify.<sup>225</sup>
- 14.5. We believe that the sanctification of the elect comes by the Spirit through faith.<sup>226</sup> The totality of this work is imperfect and incomplete in this life.<sup>227</sup> Although slavery to sin is broken<sup>228</sup> and sinful desires are progressively<sup>229</sup> weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, there remains remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to rebellion,<sup>230</sup> and call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.<sup>231</sup>
- 14.6. We believe that all who are justified will win this fight. They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls.<sup>232</sup> This perseverance is the promise of the New Covenant,<sup>233</sup> obtained by the blood of Christ,<sup>234</sup> and worked in us by God Himself,<sup>235</sup> which serves to empower and encourage our vigilance.<sup>236</sup> This type of faith believes that the war has been won in Christ, and that the battles we fight day to day will soon be over. It is a faith that lasts so that we may say in the end, “I have fought the good fight,<sup>237</sup> but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> John 16:13-14

<sup>226</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:13

<sup>227</sup> Philippians 3:12; 1 John 1:8-10; 2:1; Matthew 6:11-12; Romans 6:11-13; Galatians 5:16-18

<sup>228</sup> Romans 6:14, 17.

<sup>229</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1:18; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Peter 3:18

<sup>230</sup> Galatians 5:16-18; 1 Peter 2:11

<sup>231</sup> Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:12: 4:7-8

<sup>232</sup> Mark 13:22; Luke 22:31-32; John 10:27-30; Romans 8:30; Hebrews 3:14; 1 John 2:19; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5

<sup>233</sup> Jeremiah 32:40

<sup>234</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:25

<sup>235</sup> Hebrews 13:20-21

<sup>236</sup> Philippians 2:12-13

<sup>237</sup> 2 Timothy 4:7-8

<sup>238</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:10



# 15. What We Teach About Living God's Word by Meditation and Prayer

- 15.1. We believe that faith is awakened and sustained by God's Spirit<sup>239</sup> through His Word<sup>240</sup> and prayer.<sup>241</sup> The good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures<sup>242</sup> and praying<sup>243</sup> that God would apply them to our souls.
- 15.2. We believe that the promises of God recorded in the Scriptures are suited to save us from the deception of sin by displaying for us, and holding out to us, superior pleasures in the protection, provision, and presence of God.<sup>244</sup> Therefore, reading,<sup>245</sup> understanding,<sup>246</sup> pondering,<sup>247</sup> memorizing,<sup>248</sup> and savoring<sup>249</sup> the promises of all that God will be for us in Jesus are the primary means of the Holy Spirit to break the power of sin's deceitful promises in our lives. Therefore it is needful that we give ourselves to such meditation day and night.<sup>250</sup>
- 15.3. We believe that God has ordained to bless<sup>251</sup> and use<sup>252</sup> His people for His glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus' name<sup>253</sup> by faith.<sup>254</sup> All prayer should seek ultimately that God's name be hallowed, and that His kingdom come, and that His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.<sup>255</sup> God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed.<sup>256</sup>
- 15.4. We believe that prayer is the indispensable handmaid of meditation, as we cry out to God for the inclination to turn from the world to the Word,<sup>257</sup> and for the spiritual ability to see the glory of God in His testimonies,<sup>258</sup> and for a soul-satisfying sight of the love of God,<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> See notes 55 and 56.

<sup>240</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>241</sup> Mark 9:24; Luke 22:31-32; Ephesians 1:18-19; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; 1:11

<sup>242</sup> Ephesians 6:17-18; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 1:1-3

<sup>243</sup> Psalm 119:18, 36; 86:11

<sup>244</sup> 2 Peter 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:34; 11:24-26; 13:13-14

<sup>245</sup> Ephesians 3:4

<sup>246</sup> Ephesians 5:17. See notes 238 and 239.

<sup>247</sup> 2 Timothy 2:7

<sup>248</sup> Psalm 119:11

<sup>249</sup> Psalm 37:4; 34:8

<sup>250</sup> Psalm 1:2

<sup>251</sup> Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 7:7-11

<sup>252</sup> Romans 15:30-31; Ephesians 6:19; Matthew 9:38

<sup>253</sup> John 14:13; see also 15:16; 16:23-24, 26

<sup>254</sup> James 1:5-8

<sup>255</sup> Matthew 6:9-10

<sup>256</sup> Ezekiel 36:37-38

<sup>257</sup> Psalm 119:36

<sup>258</sup> Ephesians 1:18

<sup>259</sup> Psalm 90:14

and for strength in the inner man to do the will of God.<sup>260</sup> By prayer God sanctifies His people,<sup>261</sup> sends gospel laborers into the world,<sup>262</sup> and causes the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Ephesians 3:14-16; Colossians 1:9-11

<sup>261</sup> 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

<sup>262</sup> Matthew 9:38

<sup>263</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:1

# 16. What We Teach About Christ's Church and Her Ordinances

- 16.1. We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the all-supplying, all-sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head.<sup>264</sup> We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God<sup>265</sup> in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship and enjoyment of His presence.<sup>266</sup>
- 16.2. We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches<sup>267</sup> in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed,<sup>268</sup> to engage in corporate worship,<sup>269</sup> to practice the ordinance of baptism<sup>270</sup> and the Lord's Supper,<sup>271</sup> to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love,<sup>272</sup> to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline,<sup>273</sup> and to engage in local and world evangelization.<sup>274</sup> The Church is a body in which each member should fulfill their Spirit-assigned roles and ministries;<sup>275</sup> it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells;<sup>276</sup> it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world;<sup>277</sup> and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds – especially to the poor<sup>278</sup> – and give glory to the Father in heaven.<sup>279</sup> Finally, the Church is the Bride of Christ through which the world may experience the love of God.<sup>280</sup>
- 16.3. We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith<sup>281</sup> express their union with Christ<sup>282</sup> in His death and resurrection,<sup>283</sup> by

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<sup>264</sup> Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22; 3:6; 4:15-16; 5:23

<sup>265</sup> Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>266</sup> Revelation 5:9-12

<sup>267</sup> Acts 8:1; 1 Corinthians 16:19

<sup>268</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-2

<sup>269</sup> Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:15-16

<sup>270</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>271</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

<sup>272</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 14:26; Romans 12:6-8

<sup>273</sup> Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7, 11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

<sup>274</sup> Colossians 4:5-6; Romans 15:24; 3 John 7-8; Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>275</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13-18

<sup>276</sup> Ephesians 2:20-22

<sup>277</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15

<sup>278</sup> Galatians 2:10; Romans 15:26; Luke 14:13-14

<sup>279</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>280</sup> Ephesians 5:23-27; Revelation 19:6-9

<sup>281</sup> Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:38; 18:8; Matthew 3:6

<sup>282</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>283</sup> Romans 6:3-4

- being immersed in water<sup>284</sup> in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>285</sup> It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, the true Israel,<sup>286</sup> and an emblem of burial<sup>287</sup> and cleansing,<sup>288</sup> signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin.
- 16.4. We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord<sup>289</sup> in which gathered believers<sup>290</sup> eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood.<sup>291</sup> We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually. By faith, believers grow in grace by experiencing the risen Christ in communion with his people, by being nourished with the benefits Jesus obtained through His death, and by looking forward in hopeful expectation to eat and drink with God in a fully consummated New Creation.<sup>292</sup>
- 16.5. We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of pastor-elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Women are not to fill the role of pastor-elder in the local church, but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Acts 8:36-39; John 3:23; Romans 6:4

<sup>285</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>286</sup> Romans 2:28-29; 4:16; Galatians 3:7; Mark 1:4-5

<sup>287</sup> See note 273

<sup>288</sup> Hebrews 10:22

<sup>289</sup> See note 262.

<sup>290</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 22

<sup>291</sup> See note 262..

<sup>292</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:26-27; John 6:53-57, 63; John 21:1-14; Revelation 19:6-9; Matthew 26:29.

<sup>293</sup> Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 6:4; 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 2:12-13

# 17. What We Teach About Christ's Commission to Make Disciples of All Nations

- 17.1. We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on His Church to the end of the age.<sup>294</sup> This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation,<sup>295</sup> baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord,<sup>296</sup> and gathering them into churches<sup>297</sup> able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would bring back his people into relationship with himself and thereby create worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience.<sup>298</sup> Missions exists because worship doesn't. When the time of ingathering is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall in worship and rise in relationship with their God, the mission of God will be complete. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and the goal of missions.

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<sup>294</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>295</sup> Revelation 5:9

<sup>296</sup> See note 286.

<sup>297</sup> Acts 14:23

<sup>298</sup> Romans 1:5; 15:8-11; John 4:23

# 18. What We Teach About Death, Resurrection, and the Coming of the Lord

- 18.1. We believe that when Christians die they are made perfect in holiness,<sup>299</sup> are received into paradise,<sup>300</sup> and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth.<sup>301</sup>
- 18.2. We believe in the blessed hope<sup>302</sup> that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally,<sup>303</sup> visibly,<sup>304</sup> physically,<sup>305</sup> and suddenly<sup>306</sup> in power and great glory;<sup>307</sup> and that He will gather His elect,<sup>308</sup> raise the dead,<sup>309</sup> judge the nations, establish His kingdom,<sup>310</sup> and renew the heavens and the earth.<sup>311</sup> We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master,<sup>312</sup> and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness<sup>313</sup> will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery.<sup>314</sup>
- 18.3. We believe that the end of all things in this age will be the beginning of a never-ending, ever-increasing happiness in the hearts of the redeemed, as God displays more and more of His infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the enjoyment of His people.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Hebrews 12:22-23

<sup>300</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>301</sup> Philippians 1:23; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Revelation 6:9-11. On the issue of whether Paul conceives of the body and soul as separable, see 2 Corinthians 12:2-3).

<sup>302</sup> Titus 2:13

<sup>303</sup> Acts 1:9-11

<sup>304</sup> Mark 14:61-62

<sup>305</sup> Philippians 3:20-21; Luke 24:39-43. See note 293.

<sup>306</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

<sup>307</sup> Luke 21:27

<sup>308</sup> Matthew 24:31

<sup>309</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

<sup>310</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 2 Timothy 4:1; Luke 22:28-30

<sup>311</sup> Romans 8:21; Revelation 21:1

<sup>312</sup> Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:23, 43; 19:29; John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Jude 24-25

<sup>313</sup> Romans 1:18

<sup>314</sup> Daniel 12:2; Matthew 3:12; see also 18:8; 10:28; 12:32; 25:41, 46; 26:24; Mark 3:29; 9:43-48; Luke 16:26; Jude 12-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:11; see also 19:3; 20:10

<sup>315</sup> Ephesians 2:6-7; Psalm 16:11; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 13:12

# 19. What We Teach About The Issues Of Our Times

From time to time, it has been incumbent upon the people of God to make explicitly clear what they believe and teach on specific topics of life. We believe the following clarities are necessary at this point in redemptive history. In providing the list below, our intention is not to say that these topics are of more importance to God than others, but only that clarity on these issues are necessary for the faithful functioning of God's church in our day and age:

- 19.1. In regards to the issue of homosexuality, we affirm the declaration of the Nashville Statement (<https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>). The articles of that statement are here reproduced without change:

*Article 1 - WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church. WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.*

*Article 2 - WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage. WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.*

*Article 3 - WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female. WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.*

*Article 4 - WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing. WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.*

*Article 5 - WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female. WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.*

*Article 6 - WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about “eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb.” With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known. WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person’s biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.*

*Article 7 - WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture. WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God’s holy purposes in creation and redemption.*

*Article 8 - WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life. WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God’s original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.*

*Article 9 - WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality. WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.*

*Article 10 WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness. WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.*

*Article 11 - WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female. WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God’s design of his image bearers as male and female.*

*Article 12 -WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.*



*Article 13 - WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female. WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.*

*Article 14 WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure. WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.*