

## *Our Statement of Faith*

### *What do we believe?*

#### **Statement of Purpose:**

The Bible states clearly that the church is the “household of God, the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15) That being the case, this statement of faith has been written to communicate our convictions regarding some of the foundational teachings of the church, both as a belief system and a way of life. These truths are not meant to limit our fellowship with other Christians or churches that may hold different views, but they do express our understanding of what we believe God would have us teach on each of these subjects. Our desire is to teach the word of God with clarity and love and see God bring unity to His church as men and women are built up in the faith. Scripture verses have been provided within each section to assist you in the study of these subjects.

#### **The Bible:**

We believe that God communicates with mankind through the Bible. The entire Bible (the Old and New Testaments) is inspired by God, written through men, and is completely inerrant (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:19-21). Since the Bible is the actual Word of God, we believe that it is the authority in what we believe and in how we live (Matthew 5:17-20; John 17:17; Hebrews 4:12).

We believe that all Christians have the privilege and responsibility to interpret and apply Scripture for themselves (Acts 17:11). In order to correctly understand the Bible, diligent study and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit are required (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; John 16:12-15). When studying, one must take into account the words used, the context, the historical background, and the culture of the writer and original readers. The application of the truth of the Bible to our lives is absolutely necessary (James 1:22-25).

#### **God**

We teach that there is one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). He is a spirit who is infinite, all knowing, and perfect in all ways (Isaiah 45:5-7; John 4:24). His character

includes perfect holiness, justice, grace, and compassion. God is one in essence but has eternally existed in three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

#### *God the Father*

We teach that God the Father is the first person of the Trinity. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9; Revelation 4:11) He is the absolute and all powerful Ruler of the universe and His sovereignty is over all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 46:9-11). He works all things to bring glory to Himself (Romans 11:33-36). In His sovereignty He does not author or approve of evil, or remove accountability from men (Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:17).

#### *God the Son*

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is fully God and has always existed as God (John 8:58; John 10:30; John 14:9). We teach that when Jesus became man, He surrendered only the privilege of deity but not the divine essence. In becoming man, Jesus Christ accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and became the God-man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9). Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-25) and the purpose of His coming was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:23; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19)

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished redemption by being without sin, submitting to the plan of God, and willingly sacrificing Himself on the cross and literally rising from the dead (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24). On the basis of His sacrifice, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, penalty, power, and eventually the presence of sin. Redeemed sinners are declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive His church unto Himself, establish His kingdom on the earth, and judge all mankind (John 5:22-23; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15).

#### *God the Holy Spirit*

We teach that the Holy Spirit is fully God, possessing all of the attributes of God (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit began in this present age, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26). This work is to build Christ's church (1 Corinthians 12:13), convict the world (John 16:7-9); glorify Jesus Christ and transform believers into Christ's image (Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit brings spiritual life and baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, and empowers believers for service. The Holy Spirit secures all true believers until the end (2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each individual to be used to strengthen the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) to the glory of Christ (John 16:13-14).

### **Salvation**

We teach that salvation is completely from God, by grace, based on the work of Jesus Christ, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:13; Ephesians 1:7; 2:4-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:1-10).

We teach that at salvation, true life, the divine nature, and the righteousness of Christ are given through the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This new life, when submitted to the Holy Spirit, will show itself in God's people by them becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18) and more obedient to Him (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10, Ephesians 2:10).

We teach that once an individual is declared righteous, given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee, and adopted into the family of God, which all happen at salvation, that God will keep that person in His grace forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

### *Sin*

We teach that man was created by God free of sin and with a rational nature, intelligence, will, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7; 15-25; James 3:9). The purpose of mankind is to glorify, enjoy, and obey God as well as to accomplish the purposes of God

(Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). Through Adam's sin of disobedience, mankind lost innocence, earned spiritual and physical death (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; Romans 6:23) and became subject to the wrath of God (John 3:36; Romans 1:18).

We teach that people not only choose to sin, but are sinners by nature (Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:19). All men are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-3), refuse to seek God (Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:10-12), and are completely and hopelessly lost apart from the work of God to save them (Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Corinthians 2:14).

#### *God's Grace in Election*

We teach that through election, God demonstrates His grace to hopelessly lost sinners. Election is the act of God by which He chose in Christ, before the foundation of the world, those whom He regenerates, saves, and sanctifies. This choice is based solely on God's grace and mercy and not due to any merit or action on the part of mankind (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2; Psalm 14:1).

We teach that God's sovereignty in salvation does not negate the responsibility of His people to proclaim the gospel (Romans 10:8-21; 2 Timothy 2:8-10), nor does it contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7; Ezekiel 18:23,32; 33:11; John 3:18-19,36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 10:9-10; Philippians 2:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17).

We teach that God exercises His sovereignty and election in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love. All of God's actions will exalt Him and the fullness of His character (Matthew 11:25-30; John 12:37-41; Romans 9:11-16; 2 Timothy 1:9).

#### **The Church**

We teach that the church is a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ and made up of all born-again believers (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

Local churches are to function as a living organism, with all of the members realizing their dependence on, and responsibility to, the whole. The church is to function much like a family, with loving relationships motivated out of good for the other person and for the entire church (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 14-15; 5:1).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16) and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

### **Leadership**

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:4) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty according to the Scriptures. The biblically designated leaders to serve the church, in the example of Christ, are elders (men who are also called overseers and pastors -- 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1), both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We teach that the priorities of elders are (1) to keep right with God (Acts 20:28a); (2) to feed, and give oversight to the flock of God (Acts 20:28b; 1 Peter 5:2); (3) to warn and to protect the flock from false teaching and teachers (Acts 20:29-31); (4) to pray, study, and teach (Acts 20:32; Acts 6:4; James 5:14); and (5) to be free from self interest (Acts 20:33-35). These priorities should be expressed in the actions of each individual elder and in the actions of the board of elders.

We teach that the priority of the deacon is to free the elders of responsibilities that hinder their ability to be devoted to prayer and to the word (Acts 6:2-4) through caring for the physical needs of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13 & Acts 6:3).

### **Church Discipline**

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for the loving discipline of sinning members of the congregation as described within Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:10-11; 3:10-11). The discipline of the church must be characterized by humility and be motivated by love, the desire to win over the sinner, and with a heart to see reconciliation (Matthew 18:15-22; Galatians 6:1; Jude 22).

### **Spiritual Gifts**

We teach that the Holy Spirit equips each believer for building up the church by giving him or her spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7; Romans 12:3-4). The Holy Spirit gives the gifts according to His will for the good of the body (1 Corinthians 12:8). It is God's plan that the body be strengthened through a diversity of giftedness, and there is not one gift that all members in the body are expected to have (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

We teach that spiritual gifts must be used in love or they become a distraction and not a source of edification (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). A motive of true love would manifest itself in seeking the good of others and not the edification of self (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). All believers have the responsibility to use their gifts with self control and should be used in an orderly, biblical way for the purpose of building up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:26-33; 40).

We teach that in order for the church to experience full health and growth, every believer must be equipped to utilize their spiritual gift and fulfill the calling that God has for them in the body (Ephesians 4:9-16; Colossians 2:19; 1 Corinthians 12).

### **Baptism**

We teach that Christian baptism is a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42). It is an act of obedience to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) and is a testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). For these reasons, genuine baptism can only come after one's conversion to Christ. Baptism in the early church was done by immersion (John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39) which best reflects the imagery of what Christ has done for us (Romans 6:1-11).

### **Communion**

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be preceded by self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that even though the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless a special opportunity to share with God's people in the blood and body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). Thus, it should be done with an attitude of unity, and with the desire to follow the example of Christ in caring for each other (1 Corinthians 10:17).

### **Last Things**

We teach that Christ will return and gather His church when He comes to bring judgment upon the world (1 Peter 3:3-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7; Matthew 24:29-31; 42-51). In the judgment, Christ will reward believers (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 11:18); and judge the world for their sin (Revelation 20:11-15).

We teach that believers will enjoy eternity in the new heaven and earth (2 Peter 3:13) where we will enjoy God's presence forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Unbelievers will experience the wrath of God in the lake of fire for eternity (Revelation 20:11-15).