

C3 Teaching Statement of Faith

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1. The Spirit of This Affirmation and the Unity of the Church

- 1.1. 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 or even be a member of our church.
- 1.2. Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach —the whole counsel of God. Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion 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 the strong meat of God-centered doctrine. 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. (Acts 20: 27, Titus 1:1, 1 Timothy 4:1, 6:3-5, Eph. 4:13-14, 1 Tim. 1:5, Psalm 9:10)

- 1.3. We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of church, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other 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. (Ephesians 4:4-6, John 13:34-35)
- 1.4. We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. 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. 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. (1 Cor. 13:12, 2 Peter 3:18, Acts 17:11)

2. Scripture, the Word of God Written

- 2.1. 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, and without error in the original manuscripts. (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet.1:21, Prov. 30:5, Mt.24:35)
- 2.2. 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. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:16)
- 2.3. We believe God's intentions are revealed 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. 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. (1 Peter 1:10-11, John 11:51, 2 Peter 3:16, Matthew 4:6-7)
- 2.4. 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, and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word. (1 Corinthians 2:12-16, Ps.119:12, 18, Ephesians 1:18)

3. The Trinity, One God as Three Persons

- 3.1. We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, eternally existing in three infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the Father, fountain of all being; God the Son, eternally begotten, not made, without beginning, being of one essence with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence, as a Person, eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each Person in the Godhead is fully and completely God. (Deut. 6:4, Mt. 16:16, Job 42:2, Ps. 115:3, Daniel 4:25, Eph. 1:11, Ps 138:5, 2 Cor. 13:14, John 1:18, John 5:18, Romans 1:7, 1 Cor 8:6, John 20:31, Col. 1:15-16, John 1:1, Col 2:9, Acts 5: 3-4, John 14:26, 1 Cor 12:11, Eph.4:30)
- 3.2. We believe that God is supremely joyful in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God. (1 Tim. 1:11, John 17:26, Prov. 8:27-30)

4. God's Eternal Purpose and Election

- 4.1. We believe that God, from all eternity, in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. (2 Tim. 1:9, Rom 11:36, Ps 37:4, Rom 8:28, Eph.1:11, 1 Sam 15:29, Prov. 18:21, Isaiah 41:21-23)
- 4.2. We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons – all in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image. (Isaiah 40:26, Matt. 10:29-30, Ps.147:15-18, Gen 50:20, Rev 17:16-17, Prov. 16:9, Ps.104:24, James 1:13, Rom 1:20, 3:19)
- 4.3. We believe that God's election is an unconditional act of free grace which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began. By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin and brought to repentance and saving faith in His Son Christ Jesus. (Romans 9:11-18, 1 Cor 1:26-31, John 10:25-29, 6:37-39, Rom. 11:5-8, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:2, John 6:44, Phil. 1:29, Eph. 2:1-9)

5. God's Creation of All Things

- 5.1. We believe that God created the universe, and everything in it, out of nothing, by the Word of His power. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency, God was pleased in creation to display His glory for the everlasting joy of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Gen 1:1, Ps.24:1-2, Heb. 1:1-3, Ex. 3:13-14, Is.43:7, 35:10, Rev. 5:9)
- 5.2. 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; that they were created male and female equally in the image of God, without sin; that they were created to glorify 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. (Gen:1:27, 9:6, 1:31, Eph.5:22-33, Gen 2:18)
- 5.3. We believe there is no final conflict between the Bible and the natural sciences when all the facts are rightly understood. We reject theories of creation and evolution whose ultimate reasoning is any authority over the Bible. We believe God is the originator of all things by the power of His Word, is directly involved in sustaining and upholding the material world, and is the direct driving force behind change and development within the material world. (Genesis 1:1-31, 2 Tim. 3:16)

6. Man's Sin and Fall from Fellowship with God

- 6.1. 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, and chose to take what was forbidden, 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. (Eccl. 7:29, Gen 3:6-8, Rom. 5:12, 1 Cor. 15:21)
- 6.2. 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. All persons are thus corrupt by nature, enslaved to sin, and morally unable to delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule. (Rom.5:12-19, Eph. 2:2-3, Rom.6:16-20, 1 Cor.2:14)
- 6.3. We believe God has subjected the creation to futility, and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness, decay, calamity, and loss.

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. (Rom.8:20, 23, 2 Cor 4:16, Rom 8:35-37, 1 Thess. 4:13, Romans 2:4)

7. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

- 7.1. We believe that in the fullness of time God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh, He took on a fully human nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion or mixture. Thus the Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man. (Gal. 4:4, Matt 16:16, Luke 1:34-35, Luke 1:34-35, John 1:14, Heb. 2:14, Phil. 2:6-8. 1 Tim. 2:5)
- 7.2. We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life. He preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history. He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation: dispatching demons, healing the sick, raising the dead, stilling the storm, walking on water, multiplying loaves, and foreknowing what would befall Him and His disciples, including the betrayal of Judas and the denial, restoration, and eventual martyrdom of Peter. (Heb. 4:15, John 7:46, Mark 1:27, 4:23, Matt. 11:4-6, Mark 4:39, Matt. 14:19-25, John 13:19, John 6:64)
- 7.3. 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, such as the Seed of the woman, the Prophet like Moses, the Priest after the order of Melchizedek, the Son of David, and the Suffering Servant. (Luke 24:25-26, Rom. 16:20, Acts 3:20-23, Heb.5:5-6, Matt 1:1)
- 7.4. We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, that He died, was buried and on the third day rose from the dead to vindicate the saving work of His life and death and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory. During forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection and then ascended bodily into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet. (John 10:18, Acts 2:23, 4:27-28, 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Matt. 28:6, Rom. 4:25, Phil. 2: 9-11, Acts 1:3, 1:9-11, Luke 22:69, Rom 8:34, Heb. 1:13)

8. The Saving Work of Christ

- 8.1. We believe that by His perfect obedience to God and by His suffering and death as the immaculate Lamb of God, Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins and the gift of perfect righteousness for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who would trust in Christ thereafter. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ absorbed our punishment, appeased the wrath of God against us, vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification, and removed the condemnation of the law against us. (Rom 5:18-19, 1 Peter 2:24, John 1:29, Eph. 1:7, 2 Cor.5:21, Romans 4:3, 3:26-28, 8:1-3, Eph.2:3-6, Rom. 3:25-26, Col.2:13-14)
- 8.2. 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. Whosoever will may come for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out. (John 3:16, 4:14)
- 8.3. We believe, moreover, that the death of Christ did obtain more than the bona fide offer of the gospel for all; it also obtained the omnipotent New Covenant mercy of repentance and faith for God's elect. Christ died for all, but not for all in the same way. In His death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to His friends, His sheep, His bride. For them He obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith. (John 6:37, Luke 22:20, John 15:13, John 10:14-15, Eph.5:25, Rev.5:9, Romans 8:32)

9. The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

- 9.1. We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation, awakening faith in the remnant of God's people, performing signs and wonders, giving triumphs in battle, empowering the preaching of prophets and inspiring the writing of Scripture. 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. (Gen.1:2, Rom. 8:7-9, Judges 14:6, 1 Samuel 10:6, 2 Peter 1:21, Luke 24:49)
- 9.2. We believe that the newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ. This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ, by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe, by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory, by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts (being sovereignly free to dispense, as he wills, all the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) for the upbuilding of the body of Christ and the confirmation of His Word, by calling all the nations into

the sway of the gospel of Christ, and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people for the everlasting habitation of God. (John 16:13-14, Acts 1:8, Rom.14:18-19, 2 Cor.3:17-18, 1 Cor 12:7-10, Heb.2:3-4, 2 Thess. 3:1, Jer.31:33-34, Ephesians 2:21)

- 9.3. We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith, because all are dead in trespasses and sins; that they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him, because the pleasures of sin appear greater than the pleasures of God. Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance, wakens the dead, removes blindness, and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the Gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart. (Eph.2:4-6, Rom 8:7-8, Mark 4:19, Rom.6:17, 2 Cor.4:4-6)
- 9.4. We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. 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. 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, except that infants and severely retarded persons with minds physically incapable of comprehending the gospel may be saved. (Acts 16:14, John 16:14, Acts 4:12, Rom.1:19-20)

10. The Justifying Act of God

- 10.1. We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works, pardoning their sins, and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence. Faith is thus the sole instrument by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ, whose perfect righteousness and satisfaction for sins is alone the ground of our acceptance with God. This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification. Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us by God, neither imparted to us at baptism nor over time, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us. (Titus 3:5-7, Rom.3:23-24, 4:4-8, 5:1,18-19, Phil. 3:9, Jer.23:5-6, Gal.5:22-23)
- 10.2. We believe, nevertheless, that the faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces, by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of love and leads necessarily to sanctification. This necessary relation between 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, 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. (Gal.5:22-23, 1 Tim.1:5, 2 Thess. 2:13, Hebrews 12:14, James 2:17-20, 26)

11. God's Work in Faith and Sanctification

11.1. We believe that justification and sanctification are both brought about by God through faith, but not in the same way. Justification is an act of God's imputing and reckoning; sanctification is an act of God's imparting and transforming. 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. But in regard to sanctification, faith is indeed the channel through which divine power and transformation flow to the soul; and the sanctifying work of God through faith does indeed touch the soul and change it into the likeness of Christ. (Acts 26:18, Rom.4:3, 1 Peter 1:2, Gal.3:5)

11.2. We believe that the reason justifying faith necessarily sanctifies in this way is fourfold:

First, justifying faith is a persevering, that is, continuing, kind of faith. Even though we are justified at the first instant of saving faith, 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 of persevering faith may be rightly described as the effects of justifying faith. (1 John 2:19, Phil. 2:12-13, Gen.17:17, Rom.4:19-22)

Second, we believe that justifying faith trusts in Christ not only for the gift of imputed righteousness and the forgiveness of sins, but also for the fulfillment of all His promises to us based on that reconciliation. 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. (Rom.3:21-22, 4:20-22, 2 Cor.1:20)

Third, we believe that justifying faith embraces Christ in all His roles: Creator, Sustainer, Savior, Teacher, Guide, Comforter, Helper, Friend, Advocate, Protector, and Lord. 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. (Rom.10:9, John 1:1-3, Col.1:17, Luke 2:11, John 13:13, Acts 16:7, 2 Cor. 1:5, Phil.1:19, John 15:13-15, 1 John 2:1, 1 Thess. 3:3, Rom. 10:9)

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 also a heartfelt, Spirit-given (yet imperfect) satisfaction in all that God is for us in Jesus. Therefore, the change of mind and heart that turns from the moral ugliness and danger of sin, and is sometimes called “repentance,” is included in the very nature of saving faith. (Phil. 3:15, John 6:35, Mt.3:8, Heb.6:1)

- 11.3. We believe that this persevering, future-oriented, Christ-embracing, heart-satisfying faith is life-transforming, and therefore renders intelligible the teaching of the Scripture that final salvation in the age to come depends on the transformation of life, and yet does not contradict justification by faith alone. The faith which alone justifies, cannot remain alone, but works through love. (Gal.5:6)
- 11.4. We believe that this simple, powerful reality of justifying faith is God's gift which He gives unconditionally in accord with God's electing love, so that no one can boast in himself, but only give all glory to God for every part of salvation. 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 whose trustworthiness He loves to glorify. (Rom.8:29-30, 1 Cor.1:26-29, Rom.15:18, Gal.3:5, John 16:13-14)
- 11.5. We believe that sanctification, which comes by the Spirit through faith, is imperfect and incomplete in this life. Although slavery to sin is broken, and sinful desires are progressively weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, yet there remain remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to irreconcilable war, and call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith. (2 Thess. 2:13, Phil. 3:12, Rom.6:14-17, 2 Cor.3:18, 1 Peter 2:11)
- 11.6. 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. This perseverance is the promise of the New Covenant, obtained by the blood of Christ, and worked in us by God Himself, yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance; so that we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight, but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (Mark 13:22, Jer.32:40, 1 Cor.11:25, Heb.13:20-21, Phil. 2:12-13, 2 Tim. 4:7-8)

12. Living God's Word by Meditation and Prayer

- 12.1. We believe that faith is awakened and sustained by God's Spirit through His Word and prayer. The good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures and praying that God would apply them to our souls. (Rom.10:17, Luke 22:31-32, Eph. 6:17-18, Ps.119:36)

- 12.2. 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. Therefore, reading, understanding, pondering, memorizing, and savoring the promises of all that God will be for us in Jesus are 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. (2 Peter 1:3-4, Eph.3:4, 5:17, 2 Tim.2:7, Ps.119:11, Ps.37:4, Ps.1:2)
- 12.3. We believe that God has ordained to bless and use His people for His glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus' name by faith. 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. God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed. (Phil.4:6-7, Rom.15:30-31, Jn. 14:13, Jam.1:5-8, Matt.6:9-10, Ezek. 36:37-38)
- 12.4. 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, and for the spiritual ability to see the glory of God in His testimonies, and for a soul-satisfying sight of the love of God, and for strength in the inner man to do the will of God. By prayer God sanctifies His people, sends gospel laborers into the world, and causes the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief. (Ps.119:36, 18, Ps. 90:14, Col.1:9-11, 1 Thess. 3:12-13, Mt.9:38)

13. Christ's Church and Her Ordinances

- 13.1. We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, from every place in this age, 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. We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship. (Col.1:18, Eph.3:6, 10, Mt. 5:14-16)
- 13.2. We believe it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love, to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline, and to engage in local and world evangelization. The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for His gifts, it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells; it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world; and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds—especially to the poor—and give glory to the Father in heaven. (Acts 8:1, Eph.4:11-12, 5:18-20, Mt.28:19, 1 Cor.11:23-26, 1 Cor.12:4-7,

Gal.6:1, Col.4:5-6, 1 Cor. 12:13-18, Eph. 2:20-22, 1 Tim. 3:15, Luke 14:13-14, Mt. 5:14-16)

- 13.3. We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith express their union with Christ in His death and resurrection, by being immersed in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, and an emblem of burial and cleansing, signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin. (Col.2:12, 1 Cor. 12:13, Rom.6:3-4, Acts 8:36-39, Mt. 28:19, Rom.6:3-5, Heb.10:22)
- 13.4. We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers 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. 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, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace. (1 Cor.11:23-26, 10:16-17, John 6:53-57, 63)
- 13.5. 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. (Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, 1 Timothy 2:12-13)

14. Christ's Commission to Make Disciples of All Nations

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. This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them, teaching them the words and ways of the Lord, and gathering them into churches able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is that God would create, by His Word, worshippers who glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience. Missions exists because worship doesn't. When the time of ingathering is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship, therefore, is the fuel and the goal of missions. (Matt.28:18-20, Rev.5:9, Acts 14:23, Rom. 1:5, John 4:23)

15. Death, Resurrection, the Coming of the Lord, and Last Things

- 15.1. We believe that when Christians die they are made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth. (Hebrews 12:22-23, Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23)
- 15.2. We believe in the blessed hope that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally, visibly, physically, and suddenly in power and great glory; and that He will gather His elect, judge the nations, establish His kingdom, and raise the dead. We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master, and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery. (Titus 2:13, Acts 1:9-11, Mark 14:61-62, Phil.3:20-21, 1 Thess. 5:2-3, Luke 21:27, Matt. 24:31, 1 Cor.15:22-24, 1 Thess. 4:15-17, Psalm 16:11, Revelation 14:11, 19:3, 20:10)
- 15.3. We believe that the kingdom of God is already here, but also not yet here. We await the second coming of Christ and the complete and final fulfillment of His promises to His bride, the Church. (Ephesians 2:6-7)
- 15.4. 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. (Psalm 16:11, 1 Cor. 2:9, 13:12)

16. Angels, Satan, and Demons

- 16.1. We believe that God is the creator of all things, including spiritual beings like angels. Angels have the purpose of periodically being God's messengers but ultimately are created to display the glory of God. Humans are not to pray to angels or worship them. Humans are also to reject instruction from spiritual beings if it is contrary to His revelation found in the Bible. (Nehemiah 9:6, Exodus 20:11, Luke 1: 26-28, Psalm 103:20, Revelation 19:10, Galatians 1:8)
- 16.2. We believe one of the angels named Lucifer sinned through pride and became Satan or the devil. A number of angels followed Satan in his sin. Because of their sin, God cast them out of heaven. Satan and his demons tempt, lie, and deceive in order to blind people to the gospel and destroy their faith in God. (Isaiah 14:13-15, Ezekiel 28:17, John 8:44, 2 Cor.4:4)
- 16.3. We believe that even though there are instances of Jesus and the Apostles engaging demons, the normative approach to both evangelism and Christian sanctification is the personal faith of the individual, not the power of a demonic force over the person. However, there can be varying degrees of demonic activity

in a person's life. The devil seeks to destroy Christians, therefore we should be vigilant. Ultimately, Christians should not be overly fearful or consumed by demonic activity, but rather are taught to resist the devil and he will flee from us. (Acts 2:37-38, 2 Corinthians 12:7, Galatians 5:16, 1 Peter 5:8, James 4:7).

17. Spiritual Gifts

We believe the supernatural "sign" gifts of the New Testament functioned for the specific purposes of authenticating the apostles and their foundational ministry and message. Therefore, we do not believe these "miraculous" gifts of the Spirit are normative in an ongoing manner for the Church today. Nevertheless, God remains the God of miracles, and in His sovereign purposes, and for the sake of the glory of His name among the nations, may choose to empower a believer to exercise a miraculous, supernatural phenomena in specific settings, for the sake of the Gospel, the conversion of souls. (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Cor. 13:8-10, 1 Peter 4:9-11, Romans 11:33-36)

18. Marriage, Family, and Gender

- 18.1. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a lifetime of covenant commitment. Marriage is a good gift of God and displays the union between Christ and His church. Marriage is to provide intimate companionship, sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. (Gen.1:26-28, Prov.18:22, Matt. 5:31-32, Matt. 19:3-9, Heb. 13:4)
- 18.2. The husband and wife are equal in dignity before God, since both are equally created in the image of God. The marriage relationship models the way God lovingly relates to His church. A husband is to sacrificially love his wife as Christ loved the church. A husband should spiritually lead his wife by shepherding her sanctification with the Word. A husband also has the responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his wife. A wife is to graciously submit to the servant leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ, and serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing their children. (Genesis 1:26-28, Mark 10:6-12, Ephesians 5:22-33, Col.3:18-21)
- 18.3. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. A father is the spiritual head of his family as Christ is the head of the church, and is to shepherd his family by teaching his family the Word and sacrificially loving the family. A mother has a unique role to care for the well-being of her children and should submit to the spiritual leadership of her husband. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values to lead them, though consistent lifestyle

example the loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (Psalm 78:1-8, Prov.13:24, 22:6, Ephesians 6:1-4, Deut. 6:4-9)

- 18.4. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing from the Lord and are to receive full dignity as one created in the image of God. Children are to honor and obey their parents. The church has a unique role in caring for orphans. (Ps. 139:13-16, Gen.1:26-28, Ps.127:3-5, Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:1-4, James 1:27)
- 18.5. God created humanity as male and female. As such, gender is not a matter of one's interpretation, preference, or identity, but intrinsically tied to one's biological creation by the Lord at birth. Both genders are created equally in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26-28, Mark 10:6-12, 1 Timothy 2:12-13)
- 18.6. The Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful and thus not an acceptable lifestyle. Like any other sinful behavior, homosexuality is not a permanent condition. God can liberate from homosexual behavior and this sinful behavior can be forsaken. We deny that God hates people who practice homosexual behavior. We desire to express love and compassion rooted in the gospel to those trapped in homosexuality. (Heb. 13:4, Lev. 18:22, 20:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Romans 1:18-32, Titus 3:3-8)

19. The Church and Political, Cultural & Social Issues

- 19.1. We believe that Christians have their first citizenship in Heaven before they are citizens of any nationality, state, or culture. Their primary allegiance is to Jesus Christ and not to any political party, figure, or government. Yet, God has sovereignly ordained that governing authorities exist and that Christians live in humble subjection to these authorities. This submission is not predicated on the government's affirmation of Biblical principles or the Christian's political preferences or ideologies, but on the belief that no authority exists except that which is given by God. Thus, Christians should stand as model citizens in the world. We believe that in matters where obedience to governing authorities would violate the clear teaching of Scripture and cause the believer to sin, the believer is free from the requirement to obey the governing authorities, yet should act in humility and peace, seeking to maintain their witness of Christ to the world. (Phil.3:20, Romans 13: 1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-17, Acts 4:18-20)
- 19.2. We believe that Christians have a unique position to engage their culture, community, and context with Biblical truth as lights in this world. Despite this position, we reject the ideas that the Church is Biblically obligated to engage specific social or political issues in the culture as a byproduct of God's love for justice and that any man-made institution or political party fully represents the interests of Christ. Instead, we affirm that participation in issues of politics, justice, or social problems falls under the category of Christian freedom and that

believers should exercise judgement and wisdom in all matters, having as their primary focus the salvation of the lost and bringing glory to Christ. Christians are to advocate for Biblical solutions and perspectives in the culture rather than embrace the culture's ideologies. Where culture conflicts with the Bible in belief, practice, or ideology, Christians must reject that aspect of the culture. The Christian's worldview is to be formed by Scripture and not by the perspective of the world, thus the precedence for engaging all cultural, political, or social issues is through the lens of the clear teaching of the Bible. (John 15:18-19, Matt. 5:16, Col.2:8, Rom 12:2, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- 19.3. At the root of all injustice, racism, and brokenness in this world is the sinful nature of man. We believe that true and lasting reconciliation from the effects of sin in the world is only possible through salvation in Jesus Christ and the regeneration and sanctification of the human heart. Thus, the primary aim of the Christian in engaging social or political issues should be to see men and women forsake their sin and be reconciled to Jesus Christ. This does not mean that meaningful change cannot take place outside of salvation in Christ, nor that the Christian cannot advocate for change, but that the believer's hope and effort is in spiritual change and the advancement of Gospel principles rather than in solely securing institutional change. (Romans 3: 23, Romans 1:16, Ephesians 2:14, 1 John 2:17, 1 Corinthians 15:58)
- 19.4. We believe that matters of politics, social issues, and culture can become dividing issues inside the body of Christ and that believers are called to live in peace toward one another. On issues of political or social preferences, Christians should exercise humility and patience toward one another and not place a stumbling block before one another that divides the body of Christ over anything except issues of sin (Rom. 14:1,13-16, Ephesians 4:1-16)

20. Member Church Discipline and Restoration Process

- 20.1. We believe the Church members and Elders in accordance with the teachings of the New Testament should carry out church discipline and restoration. The purpose of church discipline is to restore to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local church and to deter sin. Members of the Church who err in doctrine or conduct will be subject to dismissal. (Matt. 18:15-18, 1 Cor. 5:4-5, Galatians 6:1, 1 Timothy 5:20, 1 John 2:19)
- 20.2. Specifically:
- First, we believe it is the duty of any member of the Church who has knowledge of an erring member's sin to warn and correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.

Second, if an erring member does not heed this warning, the warning member should again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.

Third, if said erring member still refuses to heed this warning, it should be brought to the attention of the Council of Elders. Upon careful prayerful investigation, representatives of Elders should meet with the erring member.

Fourth, if the erring member refuses to repent and be restored, the Council of Elders should communicate such refusal to the church membership. The purpose of such communication is the active prayer for and pursuit by the membership of the erring member toward repentance and restoration.

Fifth, if within a reasonable time period said erring member refuses to heed warnings and admonitions, the Council of Elders will terminate their membership.

Sixth, it is understood that if, after the Council of Elders has been made aware of a discipline process, the erring member withdraws from membership, it should be communicated to the church membership as a withdrawal from membership against the wishes of the Elders and while in the midst of a process of correction and admonition.

Seventh, if said member, after removal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, he or she should be publicly joyously restored to membership.

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NOTE: This Statement is adapted from Bethlehem Baptist Church's (Minneapolis, MN) Elder Affirmation of Faith. Our statement alters some verbiage, changes and removes some phrases, adds and adjusts some articles, and adds a number of sections.