

Statement of Faith

Calvary Baptist Church of Waterbury, CT

Scripture

Revelation:

Finite man cannot know an infinite God except that God reveal Himself to man. In this, God has made Himself known in two ways.

- (1) By general revelation man can know God by examining the natural world. His existence, power and moral nature can be observed; however, this cannot bring a person to know God on a personal level (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21).
- (2) By special revelation man can know God through the written Word of God, which includes the record of the Living Word – Jesus. Through this, we can be led to a personal knowledge of God (Hebrews 1:1-2; II Timothy 3:16).

Inspiration:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, that is, holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit and using their own individual personalities, composed and recorded the very words of Scripture. This divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings as they appeared in the original manuscripts.

The Bible consists of thirty-nine (39) Old Testament books and twenty-seven (27) New Testament books. These (Genesis through Revelation) are the Word of God and center on the Lord Jesus Christ, His person, and work in His first and second comings (Exodus 17:14; Jeremiah 30:2; Matthew 5:18; II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:20,21; Luke 24:27,44).

Illumination:

The Spirit of God works in conjunction with His Word and illuminates by casting light upon the Scriptures in the hearts of men. In this, the teaching of the Bible is made clear and applied to the individual's life. Apart from the work of the Spirit of God, there is no real understanding of the truth (I Corinthians 2:10-14; II Corinthians 4:4; John 16:7-15)

Interpretation:

The Holy Spirit illuminates the believer's understanding of Scripture, though this does not guarantee that a person will understand perfectly the Bible in all cases, simply because human beings are fallible. In receiving and interpreting Scripture, certain basic principles are required, along with our reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is to be interpreted literally wherever it is reasonable to do so, always taking into account common literary devices which may be employed. The grammatical and historical context are to be studied in keeping with the immediate context of the book and passage and then with the whole Bible, comparing Scripture with Scripture. In this manner, the Scripture would be interpreted exegetically and not eisegetically. (I Corinthians 2:10-14; II Timothy 3:15-17; John 2:19-21)

Authority:

The Scripture is God's inerrant Word to man and is true; it is to be believed in all that it affirms. It is profitable for teaching, reproof, correcting and instruction in righteousness, so that when applied, we may become truly men of God. The revelation is complete and cannot be added to nor diminished (Hebrew 1:1-2; II Timothy 3:16).

God

His Existence:

The Scriptures assume the existence of God (Genesis 1:1, 3). The Word also contains arguments of God's existence, which rest on evidence outside the Bible such as:

- (1) Psalm 19:1-6 – The existence of the universe requires an adequate cause.
- (2) Romans 1:18-20 – The existence of the universe proves the existence of a Maker and Designer with purpose.
- (3) Acts 17:29 – Man being moral and intelligent requires a Maker who is moral and intelligent.
- (4) From Logic – Universally, man has the idea of a Perfect Eternal Being. Thus, because it is impossible to imagine something that is not, an eternal Perfect Being must exist.

His Essence:

There is only one true God eternally existing with neither beginning nor end. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things and without Him nothing exists. His very nature is Spirit, and He has revealed Himself to man through general and special revelation (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-11; Psalm 90:2; Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:17; John 1:1,2; Revelation 1:8,17).

His Trinity:

There is only one true God eternally existing, but in the unity of the Godhead, there are three eternal and co-equal Persons existing in one substance though individual in subsistence – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:1,26; Isaiah 6:8; 43:10,11; 48:12-16; Micah 5:2; I Corinthians 8:6; II Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:8).

His Attributes:

There are distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God. All three Persons of the trinity possess them.

Non-moral attributes are: Omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10); Omniscience (Psalm 139:1-6); Omnipotence (Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 145:3); and Immutability (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17).

Moral attributes are: Holiness (Leviticus 11:44, 45; I Peter 1:15, 16); Righteousness and Justice (Psalm 89:14; II Timothy 4:8); Goodness (Psalm 145:9; I John 4:8; II Peter 3:9); and Truth (John 14:6; 17:3; Psalm 31:5).

Jesus Christ

His Person:

Jesus, the Christ, is the second Person of the trinity of God. He is the eternal Son of God who has existed from all eternity as God. When the fullness of time had come, He was born of a virgin becoming fully human, yet without sin and never ceasing to be God (John 1:1-18; Micah 5:2; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-11; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).

His Work:

Jesus was sent by the Father to reveal God to sinful men (John 1:18;14:9; I John 3:1,2), to confirm the promises of God (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2; Romans 15:8,9), to be a faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:10,17,18: 4:15,16: 5:1-5), to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14,15), and to be an example of a holy life (I John 2:6; I Peter 2:21). Most importantly, Christ reconciled man to God by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead (Romans 4:25; 5:10; II Corinthians 5:21; I Timothy 2:5, 6).

Jesus led a sinless life, fulfilling the law. Yet in infinite love for sinful man, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb and took away the sin which the righteousness of God must impose. His death was, therefore, substitutionary in the most absolute sense – the just for the unjust – and by His death, He became the Savior of the lost (Isaiah 53:10; Romans 5:6-8; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:24; 3:18).

Jesus was resurrected from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died. He was accepted by His Father and His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished, and His resurrection body is the pattern of that which will be given to all believers (John 20:27,28; Romans 4:25; I Corinthians 15).

Jesus is now Head over all things of the church, which is His body, and He is presently seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us, acting as an advocate when we sin. He will return again as the rightful judge and Lord of all (Colossians 1:18; I Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 10:12; 7:25; I John 2:1; Acts 1:1-10).

Holy Spirit

His Person:

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the trinity of God. He is co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father and Son.

He possesses the essentials of personhood: Intellect (I Corinthians 2:10, 11, and 13); Emotion (Romans 8:27; Ephesians 4:30); and Will (I Corinthians 12:11). He also performs personal acts ascribed to personhood: Works (I Corinthians 2:11); Searches (I Corinthians 2:10); Speaks (Acts 13:2); Testifies (John 15:26); Teaches (John 14:26); Reproves (John 16:8-11); Prays (Romans 8:26); Guides (John 16:13), etc.

He is not only a Person, but He is a divine Person. He has divine attributes: Eternal (Hebrews 9:14); Omniscient (I Corinthians 2:10, 11); Deity (Matthew 28:19); Creation (Genesis 1:2); Regeneration (John 3:5); Raises the dead (Romans 8:11); Inspiration of Scripture (II Peter 1:21) and He is called God (Acts 5:3, 4; II Corinthians 3:17, 18).

Presently, the Holy Spirit is involved in convicting men of their sin, lack of righteousness, and judgment. He is also involved in the regenerating or imparting of eternal life. At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, baptizes him into the body of Christ, and seals him unto eternal life (John 16:7-11; John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; I Corinthians 12:13; 6:19; Ephesians 1:13).

The Holy Spirit also guides, teaches, prays on our behalf, assures and illuminates the Word of God for the believer (Romans 8:14; John 16:12-15; Romans 8:26; Romans 8:16; I Corinthians 2:10).

All believers are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. At the moment of salvation, each believer is indwelt permanently with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are to yield ourselves to the Spirit's control requiring us to be dedicated in our lives to the Lord and to exercise a victorious life over sin (Ephesians 5:18; 1:13; Romans 12:1,2; I John 1:7,9; 5:4).

We have the ability as believers to grieve the Holy Spirit. However, because of His nature, He cannot overlook sin. He will chasten and correct us in love, having undertaken to save us and keep us forever (Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 12:6-8; I Peter 1:5).

The Holy Spirit is the administer of spiritual gifts to the believers at the moment of salvation; however, I believe certain gifts were provided to the first century church to validate the claims of Christianity. Once the church and the Word were established, these sign gifts such as tongues and miraculous healings were no longer needed (I Corinthians 13:8; 12:4-7; 14:21,22; Acts 2; Ephesians 2:20).

His Work:

The Holy Spirit together with the other Persons of the trinity was involved in the creation of all things. The Spirit also gave inspiration for Scripture, caused the conception in Mary, led and empowered Christ in His earthly ministry (Genesis 1:2; II Peter 1:21; Luke 1:35; 4:1; Matthew 12:28).

Angels

Nature:

Angels were created in a state of absolute holiness by God before the world began. These spirit beings will live forever and possess great power. Scripture describes them as having characteristics of personhood such as intellect, emotion and will (Colossians 1:16; Job 38:6, 7; Jude 6; Hebrews 1:14; Luke 20:36; II Peter 2:11; I Peter 1:12; Luke 2:13).

Fallen Angels:

Lucifer, the leader and highest-ranking angel, wanted to be like God and desired to usurp God's throne. Therefore, he fell through the sin of pride. A large company of other angels followed him, and they are now either active agents and associates in the execution of Satan's purpose or are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness until the judgment of that great day (Isaiah 14:12-15; Jude 6; Ezekiel 28:11-29; II Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41).

Satan, the author of sin, tempted Eve in the garden, seeking the fall of man. Therefore, man was brought under his dominion. Satan and some of his followers are presently engaged in opposing God and His work, blinding eyes of the unsaved, deceiving nations, warring against believers, and inflicting diseases (Matthew 4; I Corinthians 7:5; II Corinthians 4:3,4; 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:11,12; I Timothy 4:1-13; Revelation 20:3; I Peter 5:8).

Judgment:

Satan was judged at the cross, though not immediately executed. He now rules as the "god of this world." At the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years. After the thousand years, he will be loosed for a season and then" cast into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (John 12:31; I John 3:8; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 20:2,3,10).

Holy Angels:

A great company of angels did not follow the sin of Satan. These holy angels now minister before the throne of God, performing various duties – one of which is to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14; Isaiah 6).

Man

His Origin:

Man was originally created by the direct, personal act of God from the dust of the ground. He was created in the image and after the likeness of God, that involves those characteristics which set man apart from the rest of creation such as the ability to think, feel, choose, and communicate (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:7,21,22).

His Fall:

Adam was the first man and was created in the image of God. He was a free moral agent with the ability to choose to obey or disobey God. As recorded in Scripture, Adam chose to disobey God and fell through sin (Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:16, 17; 3:6, 7).

The result of Adam's fall was the loss of his spiritual life, and he became dead in trespasses and sins. He also became subject to the power of Satan. His spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature, has been transmitted to the entire human race. Jesus Christ, alone being the exception. Hence, every child of Adam is born with sin, without a spark of divine life, and apart from the grace of God, is without hope (Genesis 3:14-19; Romans 5:12-14; 3:10-12, 22-23; 6:23).

His Destiny:

Man's eternal destiny is determined by the choices he makes in this life. He has a choice between Heaven and Hell. This choice is determined upon his acceptance or rejection of Christ's atoning work on the cross. Man is so sinful that there is no way in which he can earn or merit salvation in or of himself. Therefore, man is needful of a divine act of grace even to understand his need for salvation, to desire it, and to receive this gift from God (Genesis 4:6,7; John 3:16,21; Romans 3:10,11,23; I Corinthians 1:18-24; Romans 6:23; John 6:37; Psalm 51:5).

Salvation

Salvation:

Like God's decrees to create and to permit the fall, God also decreed to provide salvation for all and to apply that salvation to some, namely, to those that believe. He promised this provision at the fall of man and initiated and executed the provision for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4; I Timothy 2:6; John 1:12; Genesis 3:15; John 3:16).

God extends unmerited favor toward all men (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; II Thessalonians 2:6, 7). All men are responsible to respond to the gospel in which the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin and urges the sinner to come and accept Christ (John 16:8-11). Because of the total depravity of man, he cannot change his own heart (Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 3:10, 11), regenerate his soul (John 6:44, 45; Ephesians 2:1), repent with godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:8,9; II Timothy 2:25), or exercise faith which is unto salvation (John 6:65) apart from the grace and the Spirit of God. Therefore, the Spirit enables the sinner to see his need for salvation and brings him to faith and regenerates him into a new creature in Christ (John 3:5-8; 6:44; II Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5).

Provision:

Salvation is the deliverance from sin and its penalty; it is wholly of God. God has provided only one way for all men to be saved from their sins – and that is through Jesus Christ. He is our substitute who died in place of sinners (II Corinthian 5:21; Romans 5:8). He redeemed or paid a ransom price to release the sinner from the consequences of sin (Ephesians 1:7; I Corinthians 6:20). He reconciled man so he is in a position to be brought together in peace with a holy God who cannot tolerate sin (II Corinthians 5:18, 19; Romans 5:10, 11). He is the only propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and His death alone satisfied the wrath of God (John 14:6; I John 2:2; Romans 1:18). God justified or declares righteous the believing sinner, having imputed to him the righteousness of Christ based on the merit of Christ's finished work (Romans 4:23-25; 5:1; II Corinthians 5:21).

Salvation is a free gift of God, offered to all men. It is received by faith alone. Repentance is a vital ingredient of saving faith. It is a change of mind towards sin and God and is a gift from God, not a work of man (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Luke 13:3; II Timothy 2:25; II Peter 3:9). The moment a person believes that person is regenerated or imparted spiritual life, placing him in the family of God (John 1:12; 3:1-7; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:6).

The believer in Christ is also sanctified or "set apart" at the moment of salvation. He is positionally acceptable before God by the merit of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the believer retains his sin nature which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, the present state of

the Christian is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. The Christian is to progressively grow in grace and to be changed by the power of the Spirit. The believer will not become fully satisfied until he is finally ushered into the presence of the Lord (I John 3:1-3; Philippians 1:6; 3:8-16; I Corinthians 6:11; II Peter 3:18).

Church

The Body of Christ:

Jesus spoke of building His “church” not “churches” and that He is the Head of the “church.” The church in the global sense is made up of all those who have been born of the Spirit of God in this age – being baptized into the invisible body of Christ at the instant of salvation by the Holy Spirit. The word for church (ἐκκλησία) simply means a body of “called out people.” The believers are called out from the world and from sinful things (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18; I Peter 1:3, 22-25; I Corinthians 12:13).

Local Church:

Scripture speaks of the church as also being local – which is the regular, visible gathering together of believers for the purpose of fellowship, breaking of bread, edification, giving, etc. This local church is to be a faithful replica of the true universal church and to testify to the world of the new life in Christ (Acts 2:42-46; 8:1; 13:1; 20:17; John 17:21-23).

Government:

The Scriptures outline a general pattern for the organization of the church. There are two governing bodies within the assembly, which make up the church officers – pastor and deacons. They are to be men of high spiritual character. The pastors are to minister to the spiritual needs of the church while the deacons are to be concerned with the physical needs of the congregation (Acts 6:1-6; Titus 1:5-9; I Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17; I Peter 5:1,2).

Women:

There appears to have been a distinct office of a deaconess in the church (Romans 16:1). No doubt, the early church recognized the need for women workers; however, the position is not one of leadership or public teaching. There is a biblical order of authority based on the relationship of the man and woman in the original creation (Genesis 2:18; 3:6; I Corinthians 11:3-9). Therefore, women are not to usurp the place of leadership and authority over men (I Timothy 2:12-14) or are they to take part in public teaching in the church (I Corinthians 14:34, 35). The women can instruct other women and children (Titus 2:3-5) as well as function in numerous other needful tasks within the church.

Ordinances:

There are only two outward rites that Christ appointed the church to administer as a visible sign of the redeeming truth of the gospel.

- (1) Water baptism was commanded by Christ in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:16) and is a symbol of the believers’ identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Immersion is the only appropriate way to express the identification with the work of Christ in the believer’s life (Acts 10:47-48).

- (2) The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ on the night of His betrayal (Matthew 26:6-30). The command to continue in this ordinance is found in I Corinthians 11:24. The idea of the Lord's Supper is to be a regular memorial to the death of Christ, and to signify the believer's trust in the death of Christ for salvation from sin (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

End Times

Rapture:

The rapture is the next event to occur in the fulfillment of prophecy. This will entail the coming of the Lord in the air to receive His own unto Himself. Those believers who have died before His coming will have their bodies resurrected and joined with their souls, while those believers who are alive at His coming will be instantly transformed and brought into His presence (Revelation 3:10; John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51-57; I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Tribulation:

When the "prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26) "confirms the covenant" with Israel (Daniel 9:27), the Great Tribulation will begin for a period of seven years. This tribulation period will bring judgment to the world of unbelieving men and nations, and it will prepare the nation of Israel for her Messiah. At the end of this period, the Lord will return to destroy the world's armies, to bind Satan, and to restore Israel to her own land (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-22; Revelation 19:1-21; Jeremiah 30:7-9; Zechariah 14:1-5)

Millennium:

With the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth, He will introduce the millennial age. During this thousand-year period, Christ will reign on the earth in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant. Satan will be bound during this time until the very end when he will be loosed in order to deceive nations and lead a final revolt. He will be defeated and cast into the Lake of Fire (Zechariah 14:6-9; Genesis 15:18-21; II Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10).

Judgments:

After the church is raptured, the works of the saints since the time of salvation will be judged, resulting in the gain or loss of rewards (I Corinthians 3:11-15; II Corinthians 5:10). At the second coming of Christ, there will be a judgment of the Gentiles that are living. The saved will be ushered into the Millennium, the unsaved cast into the Lake of Fire. The Jews that are living will also be judged at this point; if they have accepted the Messiah, they too will be ushered into the Millennium. Those who rejected the Messiah are cast into the Lake of Fire (Joel 3:2; Matthew 25:31-46; Ezekiel 20:37, 38).

After the Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment will occur, in which all unsaved men will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). At an unspecified time, Christ and the believers also will judge the fallen angels and cast them into the Lake of Fire, where they will spend all eternity (Jude 6; I Corinthians 6:3).

Final State:

Immediately following the Millennium, Jesus Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, where He Himself will again take His eternal place in the trinity (I Corinthians 15:24-28). The heavens and the earth will be purged and made new (II Peter 3:10-13) and the New Jerusalem will appear (Revelation 21:15, 16) and the saints shall reign with the Lord forever (Revelation 22:3-5).

Biblical Separation

Scripture clearly espouses a doctrine of ecclesiastical and personal separation. This doctrine should be applied in love; however, truth should never be set aside in the name of love.

Ecclesiastical Separation:

We believe that the body of believers is to reflect the holy character of the One who is their Head. False doctrines, evil lifestyles, and trends that could harm the body are to be separated from by the believer. Separation is based on several principles:

1. We are to separate from and not cooperate with those who are not sound in the faith and doctrines (II Timothy 3:5; II John 10, 11)
2. We are not to be unequally yoked in marriage, business, ecclesiastical and intimate, personal relationships (II Corinthians 6:14)
3. We are to “try the spirits” before we cooperate in spiritual efforts (I John 4:1)
4. We are to denounce not commend those who deny the faith (Galatians 1:6-9)

From a practical point of view, this would include a separation from the apostasy of the churches professing Liberal or Neo-orthodox views because of their heretical position on the Scriptures, atonement, deity of Christ, and other major doctrines. Separation would also include those groups who hold a partial or non-revelational position on Scripture as well as those who have an ecumenical and charismatic practice. Finally, separation should be practiced within the local church in disciplining those members who are engaged in sinful practices with the purpose of restoring them back into the fellowship.

Personal Separation:

We believe that the Lord instituted His church, which is made up of “called-out ones” who are to be His representatives on earth. They are to be conformed to the image of Christ and to demonstrate holiness and righteousness in all manner of living (John 17:15-20, II Corinthians 5:20; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; I Peter 1:14-16). Therefore, the believers should separate themselves from all forms of false doctrine and evil lifestyles (I Thessalonians 5:22; Psalms 1:1; II Timothy 3:5; Romans 16:17; II Thessalonians 3:6; II Corinthians 6:14)

We expect our staff and congregation to be committed to maintaining their spiritual walk through faithfully reading and studying the Bible along with daily prayer. We realize that our practical conduct bears witness to the indwelling Christ, so we guard ourselves from wrong or questionable practices. We do not use tobacco, illegal drugs, or alcoholic beverages. We also abstain from gambling, oath-bound fraternal organizations, and any other practice that may bring

reproach to the name of Christ. Furthermore, we endeavor to exercise a high degree of spiritual discernment with the use of television, videos, radio, CDs, Streaming, video games and a whole assortment of other items. Finally, we are committed to the faithful attendance and service in a local church.

Practical Theological Concerns

Homiletics:

We use a variety of preaching styles – expository when preaching through a book, a narrative or a text, and we use a topical approach when expounding a doctrine or biblical subject. Regardless the style, the Bible is to be interpreted literally keeping within the grammatical/historic context of the book and passage, comparing Scripture with Scripture. In this manner, the Scriptures would be literally interpreted and exegetically expounded. (I Corinthians 2:10-14; II Timothy 3:15-17; John 2:19-21)

Divorce and remarriage:

The first responsibility of a divorced person is that they remain single or reconcile the relationship (1 Corinthians 7:10-11). We realize that for various reasons many people in a divorced situation do remarry. Even within Calvary's membership there are divorced and remarried individuals (1 Corinthians 7:27-28). We recognize that God forgives, cleanses and uses those who have had such a misfortune in their life. However, because of the complexity of each situation along with the above admonition and others found in Scripture, we have chosen only to officiate first marriages between Christian couples or those who have been widowed.

Pastors and deacons are required to be "blameless" (1 Tim. 3:2, 10), "a husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2, 12), "ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3:4, 12) and having "a good testimony among those who are outside" (1 Tim. 3:7). When you combine these requirements together, it seems to me that the church's historic position is correct – that divorce, whether it takes place before or after salvation, disqualifies a man from the office of pastor or deacon.

Lay-leaders, such as Sunday school teachers, directors of various ministries, etc. must be saved individuals who are faithful *to the church services*, living for Christ and able to do the appointed task. There are no other biblical restrictions for those who serve Christ. Scripture says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Evangelism and its place in the Church:

God expects the local church to grow and its primary growth should not be from other churches. The growth that God expects is a biological growth which comes from believers winning new souls to the Lord, discipling them and making them a productive part of the assembly.

All believers have been commissioned to make new disciples (Matthew 28:19). No matter what line of work we are in, we all have been given standing biblical commands to carry out this task (Acts 1:8). To do this important work, all believers have been given the capacity to lead men and women to the Lord (John 15:16). True evangelism begins with a right heart before the Lord and will take on many forms, i.e., one-on-one, door-to-door, Bible studies at work or in the home, follow-up visitation, evangelistic outreach activities, etc. The local church's role in evangelism is to equip believers so they will be able to do this work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

Missions and Social work related to the Church:

Missions takes the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. It is accomplished through local churches sending out and supporting missionaries who will plant churches around the world. Missions may also include the support of additional ministries that aid the missionaries in their work such as schools, gospel missions, hospitals, and relief aid with the intended purpose of furthering the spread of the gospel.

Social concerns are good. Every believer ought to be socially and politically minded. These are our civic responsibilities. However, the corporate church body needs to keep in mind that the imperative command for the church is to glorify God (Eph. 1:12), which involves our worship (Phil. 2:10), evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20) and edification (Eph. 4:12). We must remember the lives changed by God are the ones that will bring permanent change to our society. The church is commissioned to spread this life-changing message of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. This is the role of the church.

Church Discipline:

The purpose of discipline is to restore the fallen person back into fellowship with God and the local church. In Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1-2, spiritual leaders are to do their utmost to reconcile differences with the fallen parties before moving to the next step. Only after these avenues have been exhausted should the matter be taken before the local church body.

Discipline is necessary to maintain the church's spiritual and doctrinal purity; to insure its self-perpetuation and existence in accordance with its original purposes; to follow the injunctions of the New Testament regarding the maintaining of local church purity (I Cor. 5:6-8); to head off, where possible, disunity and discord, both of which are not pleasing to the Lord; and to provide an atmosphere in the church which is conducive to carrying on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ to His greatest glory. While it is recognized that the individual member's purity and correction should be sought (Gal. 6:1,2), when this is not possible, the purity and welfare of the church as a whole must be the guiding principle in the discipline of its members. (Matt. 18:17; II Thess. 3:6,7; Titus 3:9-11)

Causes that lead to church discipline:

- (1) Any continual and unrepentant violation of the moral law of God's Word.
- (2) Holding and advocating doctrines or practices opposed to those set forth in the church which produce discord, disunity, or dissension.
- (3) A continual and unrepentant practice of contemptuous acts, etc.

Pastoral Counseling:

The pastoral staff are not licensed counselors. We only give biblical counsel and/or discipleship. We do not charge for our time nor do we keep records of any meetings beyond reminders of homework assignments. Not all information told in counsel can be kept confidential – under most state laws pastors are mandatory reporters of child abuse, neglect, and suicide. Staff policy for counseling should be men meet with men, women with women. Counseling with the opposite sex must be done with the counselor's spouse or another staff member present, never alone.

Music:

Music in the church can open the doors of the heart, calm one's spirit and prepare the individual for worship. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in our day. In many instances, music has become a doorway for worldliness and a lightning rod for harmful controversy and church splits. Because of these serious dangers, some churches have kept far from the rocky shores and have frozen the "safe" traditions of the past. Others have been enticed by the phenomenal growth of some churches and have modeled a concert-like setting with contemporary music as the heart of the assembly.

The church's biblical mandate is to glorify God in our worship, evangelism and edification. Within this framework, music must bring glory to God, not only in words but also style. Music in the church should not be entertainment, nor should singers and players be performers who bring attention to themselves. They ought to be pure vessels in the Master's hands using their God-given skill for God's glory in order to cultivate worship, reverence, and praise towards God.

So where should the church draw the line? We believe the local assembly should carefully blend hymns, choruses and songs ranging in style from traditional to contemporary in their worship service. Music ought to be evaluated on the basis of biblical content and style. Both should cultivate worship and not mirror the worldly aspects of our culture. Worship ought to be done in with the Word of God as the central focus, using corporate singing, solos, worship teams, duets, quartets, and ensembles to lift our souls before the Lord. It should include a variety of instruments such as the piano, guitar, cajon, keyboard, violin, and other instruments.

Philosophy of Ministry:

The general model for biblical ministry is found in Ephesians 4:11-16. The pastor is commissioned to equip the saints to do the work of ministry. As the chief elder (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-4) this involves setting a visionary agenda for the local church and as the pastor/teacher (Eph. 4:11) to feed the flock, and to see that the flock is cared for and equipped (2 Tim. 2:2). As the overseer of the flock (1 Tim. 3:1-2) to lead, delegate, and organize the assembly so they will bring glory to God in their worship; edifying one another, and growing spiritually and numerically by reaching the lost at home and around the world.

Part of the local church's role in equipping the saints is carried out their youth and children's ministries. These ministries are not to replace the parent's responsibility of teaching their children in the home; rather it should assist and encourage the parents in their God-given role. Adult, youth and children ministries are simply arms of the local church with their ministries always working in concert with the vision and direction of the local church as a whole.