



CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

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Grace Bible Church (Lebanon, TN)

Revised September 10, 2017

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PREAMBLE

We the members of Grace Bible Church in Lebanon, Tennessee recognize a church of Jesus Christ as a divinely instituted spiritual organization. We believe that we are to look to the Bible for the principles on which churches are founded and the laws by which they are governed. Therefore, we hereby adopt the following constitution.

ARTICLE I NAME AND LOCATION AND DESIGNATION

This congregation shall be known as Grace Bible Church of Lebanon, Tennessee. It shall not be affiliated with any religious denomination or association, but will cooperate in promoting the work of Christ.

ARTICLE II MISSION STATEMENT

We are the church of God seeking to Glorify God through Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, and Evangelism.

Definition of Terms

Worship

Worship is simply giving worth to God. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 96:4-9, "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!" Therefore, He is worthy to receive all our praise. And we remember that it is God who enables us to worship Him properly. John writes in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Fellowship

The root meaning of fellowship (koinonia) means “to have things in common with others.” As believers, our common ground is that we are all sinners saved by the grace of God through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ. So, fellowship is essentially the sharing of that common bond through faith in Jesus Christ with the goal of mutual edification. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Discipleship

Jesus gave what has been called the “great commission” in Matthew 28:19-20 stating, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Discipleship is simply teaching others how to follow Christ through instruction and example. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The goal of discipleship is maturity as Paul writes in Colossians 1:28, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

Evangelism

Evangelism is simply the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel message. It is a privilege and a command from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to proclaim His truth. Jesus gave us the great commission and we read in Acts 10:42-43, “And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

ARTICLE III STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe that the Bible is God’s written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible are verbally inspired in every word, absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We believe that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He is God incarnate (John 1:1,14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19) and that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity and that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind which includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ; and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness and that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

We believe that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19) and that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is 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 believe that 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) and that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

The Elder board shall be responsible for and shall establish a procedure for interviewing and approving prospective members.

Prospective members must attend a membership class (or meeting with the elders) to learn about the history of Grace Bible Church, review the qualifications for membership and public vows, and understand their responsibilities as church members.

The qualifications for membership are as follows:

1. Profession of personal faith in Christ
2. Believer's baptism (Immersion shall be encouraged, though not required of believers coming from another church; however, the normal practice of this church will be immersion)
3. Unreserved agreement with Grace Bible Church's Statement of Faith
4. Taking the public vows before God and the congregation
5. Noninvolvement in any sin that would disgrace the name of Christ and discredit the testimony of this church.

Membership Vows:

(1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

(2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally ~~exists~~ three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

(3) Do you confess that you are a sinner in the sight of God; that you are justly deserving of His displeasure and punishment; that apart from His sovereign grace you are without hope; and that in light of God's mercy and love, you humble yourself before Him, trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance upon the grace of God, you will serve Him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, to heed its discipline even should you be found delinquent in doctrine or life, and to seek its purity, peace, and unity to the best of your ability?

After taking these vows, it is fitting that the minister addresses the new members in the following or similar words:

(1) Beloved, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I welcome you to all the privileges of full communion with God's people, and in particular to participation in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

(2) I charge you to continue steadfastly in the confession that you have made, humbly relying upon the grace of God in the diligent use of the means of grace—especially the Word of God, the ordinances, and prayer.

(3) Rest assured that if you confess Christ before men, He will confess you before His Father who is in heaven.

(4) May the God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Membership Voting Eligibility

Members shall reaffirm their commitment to the above vows at church family business meetings and prior to voting.

Children may be received into membership of this church. However, they are ineligible to vote until they reach the age of 16 years.

Yearly review of the membership roll shall be carried out by the elders to delete inactive members or assign members to the inactive list.

1. A member shall be placed on the inactive list after not attending worship services for a period of three months (except in special cases where circumstances are approved by the elders).
2. A member shall be deleted from the inactive list after not attending services for a period of twelve months.

Inactive members are ineligible to vote and must be reinstated by the elders and presented to the congregation as active members before eligibility is restored.

All members are subject to the Scriptural method of discipline of its membership. (Matt 18; 15-17; 1 Cor 5; II Cor 5; II Thes 3:6; Gal 6:1)

A current list of members should be made available to all active members.

ARTICLE V CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The leadership of this church shall consist of the following:

1. Pastoral Ministry

Section A: Key Passages:

- *1 Timothy 3:1-7 -- The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*
- *Titus 1:5-9 -- This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.*
- *2 Timothy 4:1-5 -- I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
- *1 Peter 5:1-3 -- So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

- *Hebrews 13:17 -- Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*
- *Acts 20:28 -- Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*
- *John 21:15-17 -- When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.*
- *1 Timothy 2:11-12 -- Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.*

Section B: Details of the Pastor

The pastor is a man called by God, who has the primary responsibility of feeding, tending, leading, protecting, and equipping the flock (John 21:15-17). The pastor is the principal leader in the local church who is responsible for the weekly expository preaching as well as any other regular services held by the church. In tending to the needs of the flock, the pastor also leads other special services, such as weddings and funerals. The pastor position is reserved for men and not women (1 Timothy 2:11-12). The pastor serves on the elder board and is responsible to the elders, who in the absence of the pastor will fulfill the responsibility. Since the pastor serves on the elder board, responsibilities will also include those same responsibilities of the elders.

Section C: Selection Process of the Pastor

When a vacancy occurs in the office of the Pastor, the Elders and Deacons shall become the Pulpit Committee, and shall arrange for the supply of the pulpit, and as soon as possible make recommendations to the church for a Pastor. A vote by threefourths of the members present shall be necessary for the election of the Pastor and no election of the Pastor shall take place except at a meeting called for that purpose, public notice of which shall be given two weeks before.

Section D: Tenure of the Pastor

The length of the pastorate shall be by mutual agreement between the members of the church and the pastor himself. The relations between them can be resolved by the

mutual consent of the parties themselves, and two months notice shall be given by either church or pastor whenever either party wishes to dissolve the relation.

2. Elder Ministry

Section A: Key Passages

1 *Timothy 3:1-7 -- The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

Titus 1:5-9 -- This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

2 *Timothy 4:1-5 -- I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

1 Peter 5:1-3 -- So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Hebrews 13:17 -- Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Acts 20:28 -- Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Acts 14:23 -- And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 -- Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

Section B: Details of the Elders

The local church is led by a plurality of elders (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The office of elder is reserved for men only (1 Timothy 2:11-12). The elders of the local church are considered the spiritual leaders of the church, who oversee the body of Christ, hold the pastor accountable to his duties, and fulfill the pastor's responsibilities in his absence.

This elder board will have regular meetings to discuss and pray over the spiritual needs of the church.

Responsibilities might include preaching and teaching, visiting homes and hospitals, exercising church discipline, counseling, and organizing worship services.

Section C: Selection Process of the Elders

The elders will prayerfully compile a list of men who meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and have demonstrated the ability to teach.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are read on a Sunday morning. The elders will submit the names of the men to be appointed as elders to the church and announce something to the effect of:

"These are the men to be affirmed as elders and if you have a reason that you believe this man is disqualified from being a elder, then sometime in the next 2 weeks, talk to that man and/or the elders."

If no disqualifying issues have come up in those 2 weeks, then the following Sunday, the new elder(s) would be brought in front of the church and recognized as elders.

Section D: Tenure of the Elders

Elders will remain elders as long as they desire to serve in that capacity or until one of the following occurs:

- They cease attending the church

- Circumstances arise in their life that would necessitate them either stepping out of elder ministry or simply taking a leave of absence for some appointed time. (This would be a case by case scenario.)

3. Deacon Ministry

Section A: Key Passages

Acts 6:1-4 -- Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

1 Timothy 3:8-13 -- Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Section B: Details of the Deacons

The Greek word for "Deacon" literally means "servant"... So, in it's most basic sense, deacons are called to be servants in the church.

Although all of God's people are called to serve in the church, the deacons are the officially recognized servants of the local church and are examples to the rest of the body.

The deacons will be accountable in their areas of ministry to each other and will have regular meetings to discuss and plan for the physical needs of the church.

As with the rest of the body of Christ, the deacons are subject to the leadership of the elders.

As can be seen in Acts 6, deacons are to assist the elders in the work of the ministry, so that the elders would not be inhibited from devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

Responsibilities might include ushering, administering building maintenance and benevolence, caring for widows, accounting for offering and church expenses, and preparing and serving communion. The possible types of service vary greatly and are essential to the proper functioning of the church.

Section C: Selection Process of the Deacons

1 Timothy 3:8-13 is read on a Sunday morning and the church is informed that the next (2 weeks) is their opportunity to submit names of men for deacons.

These are men that have “good repute” or “witness” or “evidence” of serving in the body. These are qualified men that are characterized as that of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

After the 2 weeks, the elders will compile these names and pray over the list of men.

Some names may be set aside due to issues that the elders may alone know about (through counseling or meetings with them) that exist in these men’s lives or after talking to the men and they decline the consideration for the position of deacon.

The elders will submit the names of the men that have been compiled to the church and announce something to the effect of:

“These are the men to be affirmed as deacons and if you have a reason that you believe this man is disqualified from being a deacon, then sometime in the next 2 weeks, please lovingly approach that man and discuss the matter with him and then if necessary talk to the elders as well.”

If no disqualifying issues have come up in those 2 weeks, then the following Sunday, the new deacon(s) would be brought in front of the church and recognized as deacons.

Section D: Tenure of the Deacons

Deacons will remain deacons as long as they desire to serve in that capacity or until one of the following occurs:

- They cease attending the church
- Circumstances arise in their life that would necessitate them either stepping out of deacon ministry or simply taking a leave of absence for some appointed time. (This would be a case by case scenario.)

ARTICLE VI WORSHIP AND MEETINGS

1. Worship:

Regular services shall be held each Lord's Day

The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once quarterly

Prayer meeting and Bible study shall be held each week and may coincide

Sunday School shall meet each Lord's Day; and such additional meetings shall be provided for the congregation as will foster and promote their spiritual growth and wellbeing.

2. Business Meetings:

The congregation shall meet at least two times annually in business sessions, while a financial report shall be publicly posted at the church, at least quarterly, for members.

Congregational business meetings may be called by the Elder or Deacon board, a majority of the Elders, or 5% of the active membership

To allow for prayerful consideration of the decisions to be made, the time and purpose of all business meetings must be announced to the congregation in two regular, consecutive, Sunday morning church-wide meetings and presented to the church for a vote on the third Sunday morning. At the time of the scheduled meeting, those voting members present will constitute a quorum.

A member of the Elder or Deacon board shall preside at all business meetings. This member shall be appointed by the elders prior to the meeting.

In the event a voting member will be absent from a scheduled meeting, they may request an absentee ballot from the elder board and return said ballot in a sealed envelope to the elder board prior to the scheduled meeting.

Unless otherwise stated in this constitution, a majority vote shall be sufficient to pass any item of business before the congregation. As much as possible, unanimity shall be sought on all issues.

ARTICLE VII CHURCH FINANCES

1. The Budget:

The budget of the church shall be prepared by a collaboration of the Elders and Deacons or a portion of them and submitted to the elder board for their approval.

The Elder board shall submit the budget to the membership for approval by a majority of those present at a business meeting.

This process shall be completed before the start of each new fiscal year.

2. Real Estate:

The buying or selling of real estate shall require a majority vote of the Elder and Deacon boards and then submission to the congregation where a two-thirds majority vote of the church membership present at a business meeting shall be required for approval of the transaction.

3. Funding:

This church shall be solely funded by donations.

The only exception shall be interest earned by money placed in saving accounts or other liquid investments which have been allocated for future spending.

ARTICLE VIII AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended at any annual meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose by the favorable vote of three-fourths of the members present. For adoption at any meeting, an amendment shall have been read from the pulpit in regular public worship service at least two successive Sundays immediately prior to such meeting and clearly designated as a proposed amendment to the constitution.

APPENDIX A – FULL DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

1. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

- We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture, which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).
- We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).
- We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).
- We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

2. GOD

- We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

- We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty, He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him, and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

- We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).
- We teach that God the Father created “the heavens and the earth and all that is in them” according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operations (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).
- We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).
- We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).
- We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God’s kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

- We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).
- We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).
- We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is 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 our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).
- We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
- We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).
- We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23): a. Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10); b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46); and c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15).
- As the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the head of His body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

- We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).
- We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).
- We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26), to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ; and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).
- We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinth 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).
- We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).
- We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinth 3:18).
- We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of

pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

3. MAN

- We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).
- We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).
- We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).
- We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

4. SALVATION

- We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration

- We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:17-21), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits

to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Election

- We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Peter 1:1-2).
- We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).
- We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Peter 1:2).
- We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

- We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the placing of our sins on Christ (Colossians 2:14;

1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

- We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

- In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

- We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ 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).
- We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).
- We teach that as a result of regeneration, believers receive a "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); a new self (Ephesians 4:24); a new mind (1 Corinthians 2:16); a new will

(Romans 6:13); a new nature (Romans 6:6); and become a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Consequently, genuine salvation is transformation of the inner person (Galatians 2:20) and is therefore not defective or short-lived, but rather a faith which will endure forever (John 6:37-44; Philippians 1:6; cf. Hebrews 11).

- We teach that although some genuine believers may stumble and fall, nevertheless, because of the radical transformation imparted by the grace of a sovereign God, they will persevere in the faith (1 Corinthians 1:8). Those who completely reject the Lord provide irrefutable evidence that they were never truly born again (1 John 2:19), being “tares” among the “wheat” (Matthew 13:24-30). God’s power is never limited, especially in His ability to accomplish what He has sovereignly decreed in divine election. The security of a believer is based upon the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Securing Work of the Father

- We teach that believers are secure because the Father has chosen them to salvation from eternity past (Ephesians 1:4), having predestined them to come to the status of sonship in Christ (Ephesians 1:5). Thus, the ones the Father foreknew, predestined, called and justified are the same ones He will bring to future glorification (Romans 8:29-30). Therefore, if a genuine believer could be lost, man would in fact be capable of thwarting the purposes and power of God the Father, rendering His decrees subject to the will of man and therefore utterly untrustworthy and useless.

Securing Work of the Son

- We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed the believer (Ephesians 1:7), appeased the wrath of God toward the believer (Romans 3:25), justified the believer (Romans 5:1), provided forgiveness for the believer (Colossians 2:13), and sanctified the believer (1 Corinthians 1:2). Moreover, the Son prays for believers to be with Him (John 17:24); He continues to be their Advocate at God’s bar of justice (1 John 2:12) and He continues to make intercession as the believer’s High Priest (Hebrews 7:25). Therefore, if a genuine believer could be lost, it would imply that Christ’s work as the Mediator for believers is deficient and ineffective.

Securing Work of the Holy Spirit

- We teach that the Holy Spirit has regenerated the believer, giving him life (Titus 3:5); indwells the believer forever (John 14:17); sealed the believer for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30), the sealing being a down payment, guaranteeing a believer’s future inheritance; and baptized the believer into union with Christ and into the body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:13). Therefore, if a genuine believer could be lost, all of these divine works would become invalid and must be rescinded and reversed.

Separation

- We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).
- We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us, and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also believe that separation from any association with religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness demonstrated by a beatitude attitude (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

5. THE CHURCH

- We teach that 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).
- We teach that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).
- We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one scriptural body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).
- We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that the church leadership, gifts, order,

discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (males, who are also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

- We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- 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 discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Local churches, however, through their pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judges of the measure and method of their cooperation (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

- 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), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).
- We teach that all saints are called to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).
- We teach that the church needs to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12) and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one

another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).

- We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).
- We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful 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). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also believe that whereas the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual Communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

6. ANGELS

Holy Angels

- We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they were created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7,14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

- We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

- We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10), the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20), and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

7. LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

Death

- We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).
- We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Rapture of the Church

- We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

- We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-

12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

- We teach that after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time, the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).
- We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).
- We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ, who is the judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

- We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal, conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

8. ETERNITY

- We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

9. STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

- We teach that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27.) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.
- We teach that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as revealed in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25.) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.
- We teach that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10.)

We teach that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to our members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church, or who serve as leaders (paid or unpaid) or who volunteer in any capacity, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22.)

- We teach that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin whatever it may be as defined by Scripture. He forgives all who seek His mercy and grace through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11.)
- We teach that every person—regardless of the heinousness and life-dominating nature of their sin—be treated with utmost compassion, love, kindness, respect, and

dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the convictions of the church.

10. STATEMENT ON THE OFFICIATING OF MARRIAGE

- Because God's Word and will revealed in Scripture alone is our sole spiritual and moral authority and therefore transcends and supersedes all cultural values and laws that may stand in contradiction to it; because we are commanded to obey God, not man (Acts 5:29), and because we fear God, not man (Prov 1:7; 29:25; Rev 15:4), the church will only conduct a wedding ceremony between one man and one woman who are members of the church (or who, due to unique circumstances, have been granted special permission by the Elders), and only after the prospective couple (man and woman) have been approved by the Board of Elders for marriage, having completed the premarital counseling requirements established by the Board of Elders (including regular attendance during their premarital counseling), and having agreed with the Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality as set forth in this constitution and by-laws.