

Bylaws of The Living Word Fellowship

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1. Name

The name by which this organization shall be known in law shall be The Living Word Fellowship referred to herein as "the church."

2. Constitution

The constitution of the church derives from and subordinates to the inspired, inerrant, and irrefutable Word of God as preserved in historic copies and manuscripts of original autographs organized into the Old and New Testaments which provide the doctrinal foundations for righteous stewardship of the faith in the daily administration and activities of ministry and consists of its doctrinal standards set forth in orthodox, protestant, Christian confessions such as the Apostle's Creed and theological works in the Baptist and Modified Calvinist traditions. Whenever possible, these Bylaws shall be interpreted so as to be consistent with the church's Constitution; should any bylaw be found to contradict a provision of the Constitution, the Constitution shall control.

3. Organization and Incorporation

The church shall be organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of North Carolina.

4. Purpose and Limitations

The purposes of the church are to:

- a. Recognize the Apostolic witness recorded in the New Testament as the foundation for faith and practice because this witness presents first-hand testimony, "We beheld his glory full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14), of the wisdom of God as the light revealing the perfect character of God manifest to convey and execute to completion the perfect love of God.
- b. Appreciate the major evangelical, protestant, Christian denominations as stewards of historic orthodox theology and faith-based traditions developed through a reverent and spirit-guided commitment to preserving sound doctrine that distinguishes the glorious gospel of God which produces "love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of sincere faith" (1 Ti 1:5).
- c. Value the fullest expression of wisdom for living from the light of scripture as informed but not limited by any one theological system toward understanding the existence and principles of right beliefs for instruction that activates the living word in the ethics of daily living (2 Ti 3:16-17).

- d. Identify with the organic nature of fellowship as depicted by Jesus Christ when he esteemed himself as God (Ph 2), set aside his divine prerogatives to endure suffering for the sake of developing an intimate empathy in common with humankind (He 2:14-18) while learning obedience to the Father's will through suffering (He 5:8).
- e. Envision a fellowship of believers empowered by self-esteem as modeled by Jesus Christ (Ph 2:3-6), engaging one another with the empathy of God "even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven (i.e. graced/favored) you" (Eph 4:32), and enduring all things with esteem and empathy according to the word of his patience (Ja 1:12 & Re 3:10).
- f. Aspire to establish a presence in the Charlotte area incorporated as a non-profit, non-denominational church distinguished by the features described above and by a devotion to the development of a member-first focused ministry that equips each congregant toward a spiritual maturity for participating in the work of ministry which involves a holistic, organic, and mutual progress toward a shared unity of faith, knowledge of the son of God exhibiting the fullness of Christ as a corporate body (Eph 4:12-13).
- g. Bring glory and honor to the Triune God by promoting true worship, mutual edification, and gospel witness;
- h. Operate exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the classification of legal charities; and no part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of any private stockholder or individual; and no substantial part of the activities of the organization, or any receipt of its funds, shall be utilized for any other purpose except those purposes mentioned above;
- I. Handle affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by the civil authorities.
- J. The church shall not have or issue shares of stock, and no dividends shall be paid. No part of the income or assets of the church shall be distributed to any member or officer without full consideration. The church is prohibited from lending money to guarantee the obligation of a member or officer of the church. No member or officer of the church has any vested right, interest, or privilege in or to the assets, property, functions, or activities of the church. The church may contract in due course, for reasonable consideration, with its members or officers without violating this provision.

5. Location of Office

The registered office of the church shall be located within North Carolina at the address of the church's registered agent. The Board of Directors or a majority of the members may change the registered agent and the address of the registered office from time to time, upon filing the appropriate statement with the Secretary of State.

6. Membership

- a. The membership shall consist of all communing members and non-communing members, all of whom have the privilege of pastoral oversight, instruction, and government by the church. Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's table as provided in Bylaw 6.b. Non-communing members are the children of communing members.
- b. A person may be received into communing membership by a letter of transfer from another church of like faith and practice approved by the Session, by reaffirmation of faith, or by confession of faith. In order to be received into communing membership, a person must also complete the membership course, submit a Membership Application, sign a Membership Covenant, and be accepted by the Session.
- c. All adult communing members in good standing in the church shall be voting members. An adult communing member shall be constituted of anyone of the age of 12 and beyond while dependent upon parents and when deemed by parents as demonstrating wisdom commensurate with the issue of record. ("Good standing" means that a member is not presently under the censure of suspension or deposition.) Any voting member in attendance at a duly called meeting shall be entitled to one vote on matters brought before the congregation. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted. The pastors shall also be entitled to vote.
- d. Members may be removed from membership at their own request by informing the Session of their intention to withdraw and their reasons. If a member requests to withdraw because of specific problems or disappointments with the church, the Session shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the Session is unable to resolve those matters, it shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and practice that can respond more effectively to his gifts and needs. If it appears to the Session that a member has requested removal merely to avoid church discipline, the Session, at its discretion, may refuse the request until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded (see Matt. 18:12-20).
- e. Members may also be removed from membership by order of the Session when they: persistently, over an extended period of time, and without presented reason (in writing or as communicated to and confirmed as written by an elder or deacon) absent themselves from the stated services of the church; unite with a church of another denomination; cannot be found for a period of one year; or are removed by excommunication for persistent impenitence. Non-communing

members may be removed from membership with their parents or when they reject the covenantal responsibility of submission to scripture and Spirit of God as evidenced by rejecting the responsibility of submission to home or church and neglect of the ongoing exhortation and invitation of the Session to acknowledge what they reject, repent of the rejecting belief and behaviors, and profess faith in Christ .

7. Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses

a. Elders and deacons must be male and deaconesses must be female voting members. In order to be eligible for election, a man and woman shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in Scripture (see 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) as validated by spouse and family. He or she shall also have been a member in good standing in the church for at least from its inception to two years, shall have received appropriate training under the direction or with the approval of the Session, and shall have served the church in functions requiring responsible leadership.

b. Elders are to watch diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals. Evils that they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the Session. They should visit the people, especially the sick, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the children of the covenant. They should pray with and for the people. They should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the pastor and help him in his labors.

c. Deacons and Deaconesses shall demonstrate the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy toward the saints and strangers on behalf of the church. As delegated and directed by the Session, they shall minister to the temporal needs of members and friends, and see to the care and maintenance of church property.

d. Any voting member may propose to the Session nominations for the offices of elders, deacons, and deaconesses. Nominations typically take place in the month of February. The Session shall approve for training those nominees it judges to possess the necessary qualifications for office. An elder, deacon, or deaconess who had been previously certified but who resigned from or was divested of the office must be re-certified and given public notice through verbal and written announcement within two weeks of recertification.

e. Notice of a meeting to vote on elders, deacons, and deaconesses shall be given verbally, in the church bulletin, or by written notice at least two weeks in advance of such meeting. Accompanying this notice will be printed testimonies of each person eligible for election to office. Voting on the election of elders, deacons, and deaconesses shall be done by signed ballot, and those candidates receiving the vote of a majority in favor of their election shall be deemed elected. Elders, deacons, and deaconesses shall be elected for three-year terms of service; however, it is to be recognized that election to the office of elder or deacon is perpetual. Upon completion of any three-year term, the elder or deacon may be elected for an additional term of service after they have completed at least one sabbatical year.

f. An elder, deacon, or deaconess may be divested of his or her office by deposition for an offense in doctrine or life. He or she may also be divested without censure by action of the Session if spouse protests, if a majority of the congregation so requests, or if he cannot or does not for a period of one year perform the duties of his office. An elder, deacon, or deaconess also may resign from his/her office, or he/she may be

relieved of certain responsibilities when he becomes infirm or by reason of age desires to be released from his duties.

8. Pastors

a. It is the charge of the pastor both to oversee the stewardship of ministry in feeding and tending the flock as Christ's minister and with the other elders to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to arrange the public worship of God; to pray for and with Christ's flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of people, instructing and counseling individuals, and training them to be faithful servants of Christ; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and to make known the gospel to the lost.

b. If the congregation shall choose to elect an associate pastor, his relationship to the church shall be as determined by the congregation. If the Session calls an assistant pastor, his relationship with the church shall be as determined by the Session. The norm for new hires defines the role as assistant to the pastor even if they have served as associate or senior pastors elsewhere and gives consideration in moving them to associate pastor after a 1-2 year time of service.

c. The pastor and any associate pastor shall be elected by the congregation upon recommendation of the board of directors.

d. A pastor may resign from his position upon due consideration of the needs and counsel of the church. If the church desires to be relieved of its pastor, it may, through a duly called congregational meeting, ask him to resign. If the pastor agrees to do so, the session will determine with the pastor a dissolution of relationship upon a mutually agreeable date. If the pastor is not willing to resign, the church may petition the Session to mediate by preparing a statement of the congregation's case for resignation and request for the pastor's affirmation of the case and acknowledgment of the request. This first step serves to clarify and establish a mutual understanding of the issues and not a presumption of agreement with either party. The Session may grant the request, but only after giving the pastor opportunity to present his reasons for not concurring, or it may urge the congregation to reconsider its action. If the pastor resists by dissension or attempts to sabotage this process, then by default, he validates his resignation. The decision of the Session shall be final and binding.

9. Session (Board of Directors)

a. The Session is the governing body (Board of Directors) of the church and consists of its pastor, associate pastor(s), and elders. The Session shall manage the business affairs of the corporation, oversee all matters

concerning the conduct of public worship, and encourage the best measures for promoting the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation. It shall receive, dismiss, and exercise discipline over the members of the church, supervise the activities of the Board of Deacons and all other organizations of the congregation, and have final authority over the use of the church property.

b. The pastor shall be the moderator (chairman) of the Session. The Session shall elect its clerk (secretary) annually from among its members. The Session may also choose a vice-moderator from among its members.

c. The Session shall have final authority for affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by civil law for nonprofit corporations. The Session may delegate to the Board of Deacons, the Trustees (cf. 9d) or to other communing members such of these responsibilities as it deems appropriate.

d. The church may appoint Trustees who shall be responsible for executing any documents required for the acquisition and disposition of church property. All Trustees shall be members of the Session.

e. The Session shall meet at least quarterly and shall convene at the call of the moderator, any two members of the Session, or upon its own adjournment. Either oral or written notice, including the date, time, and place of a meeting, shall be given at least seven days before a meeting. If mailed, notice shall be deemed to be effective the day after the letter is postmarked. Notice may be waived either orally or in writing. An elder's or pastor's attendance at a meeting waives his right to object to lack of notice or defective notice of the meeting, unless at the beginning of the meeting (or promptly upon arrival), he objects to holding the meeting or transacting business at the meeting, and does not vote for or assent to action taken at the meeting.

f. When the church has a pastor, a quorum is two elders if there are three or more, or one elder if there are fewer than three, together with the pastor. When the church has no pastor, a quorum is three elders if there are five or more, or two elders if there are less than five elders. In no case may the Session conduct its business with fewer than two present who are entitled to vote.

g. The act of a majority present at a Session meeting at which a quorum is present (when the vote is taken) shall be the act of the Session. A pastor or elder shall be deemed to have approved of an action taken if he is present at a meeting of the Session unless: (1) he objects at the beginning of the meeting (or promptly upon arrival) to holding it or transacting business at the meeting; or (2) his dissent or abstention from the action taken is entered in the minutes of the meeting; or (3) he did not approve the action and he delivers written notice of dissent or abstention to the presiding officer of the meeting before its adjournment or immediately after adjournment of the meeting.

h. If at any time there are less than three persons on the Session, the congregation may elect from the Board of Deacons and, if necessary, from among the voting members, individuals who will temporarily serve as directors of the church for the purpose of

carrying out any required corporate business. The terms of such temporary directors shall expire when sufficient elders have been elected to bring the number of the Session to three or more. If the Session shall cease to exist or become so small as to prevent it from working effectively, the congregation, may appoint elders or ministers, or both, to be an acting Session or to augment the existing Session temporarily.

i. The Session may meet by means of a conference telephone call or similar communications equipment, provided all persons entitled to participate in the meeting received proper notice of the telephone meeting, and provided all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time. A member participating in a conference telephone meeting is deemed present in person at the meeting. The moderator of the meeting may establish reasonable rules as to conducting business at any meeting by phone.

j. The moderator shall be the chairman of the Board of Directors and the principal executive officer (president) of the corporation. The moderator shall be subject to the control of the Session, and shall in general supervise and control, in good faith, all of the business and affairs of the church. The moderator shall, when present, preside at all meetings of the members and of the Session, and shall conduct such meetings so as to facilitate free and respectful debate and decision-making. The moderator may sign, with the secretary or any other proper officer of the church that the Session has authorized, corporation deeds, mortgages, bonds, contracts, or other Session authorized instruments.

k. The Session may appoint a vice-moderator (vice-chairman), who may perform, in good faith, the moderator's duties if the moderator is absent or is unable or refuses to act, and if any emergency should arise requiring immediate action. In addition, associate or assistant pastors may substitute for the pastor as moderator of the Session at the discretion of the pastor and Session. A vice-moderator or substitute moderator shall have all of the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the moderator. When the church is without a pastor, the moderator of the Session may be either a minister appointed for that purpose by the Session, or one invited by the Session to preside on a particular occasion, or one of its own members elected to preside. In judicial cases, the moderator shall be a minister invited by the session or one of its own members provided the session member holds no conflicts of interest, in written statement discloses the same, and relinquishes any prejudice in the adjudication of the judicial case.

l. The clerk of the Session shall in good faith: (1) create and maintain one or more books for the minutes of the proceedings of the Session; (2) provide that all notices are served in accordance with these Bylaws or as required by law; (3) be custodian of the church records and corporate records; (4) subscribe the minutes of all meetings of the Session; (5) when requested or required, authenticate any records of the church; (6) keep a current register of the post office address of each member; and (7) in general perform all duties incident to the office of secretary and any other duties that the moderator or the Session may assign to the secretary.

m. The church treasurer shall: (1) have charge and custody of and be responsible for all funds and securities of the church; (2) receive and give receipts for moneys due and payable to the church from any source, and deposit all moneys in the church's name in banks, trust companies, or other depositories that the Session shall select; (3) submit the books and records to a Certified Public Accountant or other accountant as directed by the Session; and (4) in general perform all of the duties incident to the office of treasurer and any other duties that the moderator or Session may assign to the treasurer. If required by the Session, the treasurer shall give a bond for the faithful performance of the treasurer's duties and as insurance against the misappropriation of funds. If a bond is required, it shall be in a sum and with the surety or sureties that the Session shall determine. The treasurer shall be elected by the Board of Deacons.

10. Board of Deacons

The Board of Deacons shall oversee the ministry of the deacons and deaconesses. The Board of Deacons shall elect a chairman and co-chairwoman and a secretary from their number. It shall meet separately at least once a quarter, and whenever requested by the Session. The Board of Deacons shall determine the number necessary from deacons and deaconesses for a quorum.

11. Congregational Meetings

a. An annual meeting of the church shall be held each year at a date, time, and place to be determined by the Session. At the annual meeting, the voting members shall elect elders, deacons, and deaconesses and transact any other business that is stated in the notice calling the meeting.

b. Special meetings of the church shall be called at a date and location to be determined by the Session whenever the Session deems it to be in the best interests of the church or when requested in writing to do so by more than seventy percent of the session and approved by a majority of congregational vote.

c. The date, time, and location of all congregational meetings must be announced orally, by email, or in the church bulletin at least one week prior to the time set for the meeting, or by letter mailed at least eight days prior to the meeting. If the voting members adjourn any congregational meeting to a different date, time, or place, notice of a new date, time, and place need not be given if the new date, time, and place is announced before adjournment. A member entitled to a notice may waive notice of the meeting (or any notice required by the laws of the State of North Carolina or these bylaws), by a writing signed by the member. The member must send the notice of waiver to the church (either before or after the date and time stated in the notice) for inclusion in the minutes or filing with the church records.

d. The purpose of a meeting shall be announced in advance. When a meeting is called for the transaction of specific matters of business, no business shall be conducted except that which is stated in the notice.

e. A member's attendance at a meeting: waives the member's right to object to lack of notice or defective notice of the meeting, unless the member at the beginning of the meeting objects to holding the meeting or transacting business at the meeting; and, waives the member's right to object to consideration of a particular matter at the meeting that is not within the purpose or purposes described in the meeting notice, unless the member objects to considering the matter when it is presented.

f. One-fourth (1/4) of the voting members shall constitute a quorum at congregational meetings. Unless provided otherwise in these Bylaws, a majority vote of those in attendance, a quorum being present, is sufficient to decide any matter.

g. The pastor shall be the moderator of congregational meetings by virtue of his office. If it should be impracticable or inexpedient for him to preside, or if there is no pastor, the Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer, who may be a minister of a church of like faith and practice, or any male member of that particular church.

h. A clerk shall be elected by the congregation to serve at that meeting or for a definite period, whose duty shall be to keep correct minutes of the proceedings and of all business transacted and to preserve these minutes in a permanent form, after they have been attested by the moderator and the clerk of the meeting. He shall send a copy of these minutes to the Session of the church.

12. Church Records

a. The Session shall keep the following records: (1) minutes of its meetings, including a record of the administration of the sacraments and changes in the membership of the congregation; (2) minutes of the meetings of the congregation; (3) rolls of the members in the congregation (communing and non-communing), with the dates of their reception; (4) resolutions adopted by the Session; (5) appropriate accounting records; (6) its articles or restated articles of incorporation and all amendments to them currently in effect; and (7) its bylaws or restated bylaws and all amendments to them currently in effect.

b. The Session members shall review meeting minutes as written and sign the minutes with, if needed, notation.

c. A member shall be entitled to inspect and copy, at a reasonable time and location specified by the Session, any of the church records described above, provided the Session finds that the member has a proper purpose and is acting in good faith. Any determination by the session that deems a member's purpose improper shall be justified in a written statement and shall receive a unanimous vote of approval by the Session. The Session may limit access to any records that contain confidential information about a particular person or persons.

13. Relational Commitments

a. Relationships in the church will be guided and governed by the biblical principles set forth in the New Testament Epistles which are incorporated into these

Bylaws by reference as if set forth herein in its entirety. The New Testament epistles establish our commitments related to peacemaking and reconciliation, preserving marriages, protecting children, biblical counseling, confidentiality, accountability, and church discipline (see also the provisions of BCO Part II, THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE, and CBTJ Fall 1998-1999, for detailed guidance).

b. The "Relational Commitments" of our church are further supplemented by the guidance of BCO Appendix I, Biblical Conflict Resolution, Geisler's Systematic Theology V.4; Frame's "The Doctrine of the Christian Life," and Erickson's "Christian Doctrine" 2nd ed. These resources, while non-binding, provide guidance for the practice of Christian Conciliation as a means of resolving any conflicts that may develop within our church and will be the preferred course of response over judicial actions to the extent that circumstances may permit.

14. Ownership and Distribution of Property

a. The church shall hold, own, and enjoy its own personal and real property, without any right of reversion to another entity, except as provided in these Bylaws.

b. "Dissolution" means the complete disbanding of the church so that it no longer functions as a congregation or as a corporate entity. Upon the dissolution of the church, its property shall be applied and distributed as follows: (1) all liabilities and obligations of the church shall be paid and discharged or adequate provision shall be made for them;

(2) assets held by the church upon condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements; (3) assets received and not held upon a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the dissolution, shall be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the responding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and are engaged in activities substantially similar to those of the corporation; this distribution shall be done pursuant to a plan adopted by the Session, provided that no assets are distributed to any organization governed by a member of the Session.

d. Any assets not otherwise disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the corporation is then located, for such purposes and to such organizations as said court shall determine, provided such organizations are of like faith and practice.

15. Indemnification of Officers

a. The Session may choose to indemnify and advance church-related expenses of any elder, deacon, employee, or agent of the church.

b. The church shall indemnify any elder or deacon or former elder or deacon of the church against expenses actually and reasonably incurred by him in connection with the defense of any action, suit or proceeding, civil or criminal, in which he is made a party by reason of being or having been such elder or deacon, except in relation to matters as to which he shall be adjudged in such action, suit or proceeding to be liable for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his duty.

16. Rules of Order

All meetings of the church, the Session, and its various boards and committees shall be conducted pursuant to the latest edition of Roberts Rules of Order.

17. Amendment of Bylaws

These Bylaws may be amended or repealed only by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the voting members present at a duly-called meeting of the Session.

18. Marriage & Human Sexuality

a. Marriage: Marriage has been instituted by God. The church defines “marriage” as the exclusive covenantal union of one man and one woman in which such union is a lifetime commitment. A civil government’s sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of “marriage” found in these Bylaws.

b. Human Sexuality: Legitimate sexual relations are exercised solely within marriage. Hence, sexual relations outside of marriage (referred to in the New Testament as “porneia” — πορνεία) including, but not limited to, adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, and pedophilia are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the Church. Further, lascivious conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation, distribution or viewing of pornography, are incompatible with the biblical witness.

c. Qualifications: Every minister, board member, member, or employee, shall affirm their agreement with the Bylaws and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith. This shall be a prerequisite, and continual condition, for holding these positions.

19. Doctrine

The doctrine of the church shall be that system of doctrine common to historic, orthodox, and evangelical Christianity and published in such scholarly works by Erickson, Geisler, and Frame as cited in Section 2 and 13 (which represents our Articles of Faith); an abbreviation of these, called "The Doctrinal Statement of this Church," is as follows:

We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are inspired of God, inerrant in the original writings, and are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.

SCRIPTURES: Nothing at any time is to be added to this Scripture, either by new revelations of the Spirit or by traditions of men. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself.

We believe in one God existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, co-equal and eternal.

GOD: He is unchanging, boundless, immeasurable, eternal, almighty, all-wise, holy, free and absolute. He accomplishes all things for His own glory according to the purpose of His own unchangeable and righteous will. He is loving, gracious, merciful, patient, abundant in goodness and truth, the forgiver of iniquity, transgression and sin. He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him; yet He is just in His judgments, hating all sin, and will by no means acquit the guilty. He has sovereign rule over His creation, to do by them, for them, or to them whatever He pleases. In His sight all things are open and clear; His knowledge is unlimited, infallible and not dependent upon the action of His creatures.

God has from all eternity determined everything that should happen *as evidenced by forbidding humankind to choose contrary to his word and by permitted everything that has happened as evidenced by creating humankind with the power to imagine, to reason, and to submit imagination and reason to His sovereign will and word by virtue of choosing obedience*; is not the author of sin, yet allows His creatures to exercise autonomy. He has made provision for all to participate in covenant fellowship with Him, predestined those receiving the word to eternal life, in others He has permitted hardness of heart toward the Word, and adjudicates individual destiny according to His sovereignty and wisdom. He has also foreordained the means of their salvation through Christ's atoning sacrifice and the Spirit's work.

That God both exercises sovereignty while permitting human autonomy demonstrates that as God is the uncaused cause of creation, so sin is the uncaused cause of its destruction. We believe that the reformed position errs when it deduces from total depravity and unconditional election the limited atonement based upon the premise of irresistible grace and perceived concept of sovereignty over against inconceivable sovereignty and sets God's ways under the perception of logic rather than the precept of scripture (Dt. 29:29).

We believe that man was created in the image of God, that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also the spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature.

MAN: Adam, the first man, sinned against God's covenant of works and brought ruin upon his race by presuming the right to decide good and evil autonomously by turning toward desire as the standard of goodness, conceiving instruction from sensual perception, and consummating autonomy by direct disobedience of God's word. This depraved condition in principle renders us subject to the world's moral imperative of survival ethics and contrary to the spiritual life and ethics of the kingdom of heaven and at enmity with God. Thus, rendered subject to the survival imperative of the evil impulse and the sin principle manifest as unable to learn and to will goodness as God intended by virtue of inherent opposition to the good and inclination to all that is evil.

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin.

JESUS CHRIST: As a man He was sinless and not defiled. His righteous life among men, and His death thoroughly qualified Him for His role of mediator before God's throne, interceding for His people. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice and that all that believe in Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood.

CHRIST'S DEATH: Christ's atoning death for His people resulted in salvation - justification, sanctification and glorification - the evidences of which are exercised in faith, repentance, and holy living based upon the knowledge that in Jesus' voluntary death in its crushing passion and crucifixion fully propitiated the wrath of God and fulfilling the angelic announcement of "Peace on earth, goodwill toward man."

We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord, in His ascension to heaven and in His present life there for us as sympathetic, empathetic, and compassionate High Priest and Advocate.

RESURRECTION: His resurrection guaranteed the bodily eternal resurrection of every human being, whether a resurrection to life or to death. We believe in that blessed hope, the personal and visible return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

BLESSED HOPE: This will usher in the judgment of condemnation on the wicked and the eternal blessedness of God's people in His Presence.

We believe that when Christ had completed his work of salvation upon the cross and ascended into heaven he sent the Holy Spirit to live in the heart of each believer. The Holy Spirit comes to call, comfort, regenerate, enlighten, equip and empower each one for the works of service which God has prepared beforehand for His people to do.

HOLY SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit was given in a special way at the time of Pentecost for the ministry of the Apostles. With their death, the Apostolic era ended along with ministry of special and powerful signs of the Spirit. Through the ministry and teaching of the Apostles we were given the completed and inerrant word of God. Today the Holy Spirit interacts with each believer, personally, to develop understanding of the gospel, maturity of belief, unity of the body and personal involvement in the call God gives to each generation to continue the extension of His Kingdom throughout the world.

We believe that all who are born again of the Holy Spirit receive the word that quickens faith as the mode of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby become children of God by adoption.

BORN AGAIN: Those who thus exercise saving faith in Christ do so because God has through the living word given them a case for confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and a conviction of heart that believes the word of Jesus Christ as authoritative cleansing and creating a new heart in which to receive a new identify and to internalize God's character, unlike the heart inorganic life, like that of a stone that was their's by nature. Salvation-the living word and eternal life-is of the Lord!

We believe in the eternal security and everlasting blessedness of the saved, and the eternal conscious punishment of the lost.

ETERNAL SECURITY: Believers, because of their new nature, are enabled by the Holy Spirit to persevere to the end, increasing in godliness and victory over personal sin before glorification. The unsaved are condemned on the basis of their own sinful works, falling short of God's standard, and not coming under the forgiveness that is in Christ.

We believe that Christ instituted the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be observed until He comes.

BAPTISM & LORD'S SUPPER: These picture the work of the Holy Spirit and of Christ, respectively, and are to be practiced only by those who are under the New Covenant and in fellowship with God and His people.

We believe the Church is the people of God. There is no other head of the Church than the Lord Jesus Christ. The visible Church consists of all those living around the world today who profess the true religion of Jesus Christ, together with their children. All believers should confess their faith by joining with a local expression of the body of Christ that seeks to proclaim and follow the inerrant word of God.

THE CHURCH: God has loved and chosen His people in terms of a covenant relationship in which the visible Church in each generation is called to worship and serve the Lord in humble obedience. To this visible Church, Christ has given His revealed truth for the gathering and perfecting of His saints in this life. The invisible Church consists of the whole number of the elect of every generation that have been, are being and shall be gathered into one under the Headship of Jesus Christ.