

Christ Fellowship of Hannibal

Doctrinal Statement

The following is simply an effort to quickly familiarize you with our general teaching and emphasis. We believe it is faithful to God's revelation though it will never be a guide for our beliefs or practices as a church—that is reserved for the Bible. We have tried to both capture our current understanding and emphasis on these points as well as to allow for some room to grow and deepen in our views. While we affirm this document as true, we do not do so as though it were a document to be believed alongside of the Bible, nor as though it were a church covenant requiring adherence, nor as an interpretive lens through which to read the Bible, but rather as nothing more than a fair representation of our current understanding of the Bible. Obviously we cannot include everything that we believe or the document would no longer be brief. We desire to sharpen our understanding in every truth.

Bible

We believe and teach the Bible^a is the *self-attesting*^b word of God^c and that the God who communicates through it^d is the sole authority of His creation^e and *alone* is the fountainhead of truth.^f Therefore His Word is a sure guide and the supreme standard by which *all* human conduct, creeds, and opinions must be tried.^g The Bible is without error in the original manuscripts, being written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.^h We believe the Old Testament is an incomplete revelation, finding its completion and fulfillment in the New Testament.ⁱ

^a The 66 books of Holy Scripture.

^b *Meaning the Bible is of such a nature that it does not look to a higher authority for verification because there is no higher or independent authority by which to judge it, and because its own beauty, profundity, scope, power, and penetrating depth of discernment are undeniable proof that it is the very word of God; it carries its own credentials. Scripture proofs are below.*

^c Hebrews 6:13; John 1:4, 9, 14; Romans 1:32; 2:14-15, John 7:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Acts 1:16

^d Amos 3:7-8; Hebrews 1:1-2; Acts 10:44; Romans 10:17

^e Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 14:27; Psalm 115:3

^f Isaiah 45:19; John 14:6; John 17:17; Romans 1:18-19

^g Acts 2:2; 4:19; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; John 8:31

^h 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:11; Acts 3:18

ⁱ Matthew 11:13; John 5:39, 46; Luke 24:25-27; 24:44-49; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 1:1-2

God

We believe and teach there is but one true and living God,^a that He is our God, and that He is glorious.^b He exists in three eternally distinct Persons: the Father, the Son (or Word), and the Holy Spirit^c all having the same attributes and qualities, yet they are not three Gods, but one.^d These three Persons are united in purpose,^e equal in deity, power, and glory,^f and equally worthy of adoration.^g God's *chief* attribute is His holiness,^h meaning He is totally and majestically superior, distinct, and unlike any other being.ⁱ Therefore He is unknowable apart from His own self-disclosure to us, and He is never totally comprehensible.^j

He is self-existent, depending upon none;^k invisible, but genuinely revealed to us in the person of Jesus;^l eternal and without beginning;^m omni-present, filling heaven and earth;ⁿ almighty, having no limitations whatsoever;^o infinitely wise, possessing all knowledge and declaring the end from the beginning;^p unchanging, yet responsive to His creation;^q sovereign over every will, being, and function in the universe;^r righteous above all standards;^s just according to His righteous law;^t gracious to the sons of men;^u loving, as demonstrated clearly in the willing sacrifice of the Son;^v merciful, saving sinners from their ruin;^w patient, being slow to anger and abounding in love;^x kind, desiring all men to repent and come to the knowledge of Christ;^y good, possessing and demonstrating every virtue in every act;^z and severe, punishing the wicked in wrath according to His own righteous anger.^{aa}

^a Deuteronomy 4:39; Isaiah 44:6; 45:5-6

^b 1 John 1:3; Psalm 48:14; Exodus 15:11; Psalm 138:5; 145:5; Isaiah 6:1-5; 35:2; 40:5; 45:5; Nehemiah 9:5

^c Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; John 1:1-2, 18; 12:40-41 (cf. Isa. 6:1-10); 17:5; Acts 10:38; Genesis 1:2; 1:26-27; 3:22; 2 Corinthians 3:18

^d Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 14; Isaiah 45:5-6; James 2:19; Psalm 45:6-7

^e John 5:19-30; Isaiah 48:16; 63:10

^f John 8:58; 17:24; Acts 10:38; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 2:13; Isaiah 9:6; Acts 5:3-4; Psalm 139:7-8

^g John 5:23; 20:28; Philippians 2:5-11; Revelation 14:4; 17:14; 21:22

^h Isaiah 6:3; Rev. 4:8 *Never is any attribute of God repeated three times for emphasis as is this attribute, nor is any so often repeated.*

ⁱ Exodus 15:11; 1 Samuel 2:2; 7:22; Psalm 86:8; 89:6-8; Isaiah 8:13; Jeremiah 10:7; Hosea 11:9; Revelation 15:4

^j Romans 1:19-20; Acts 14:17; John 15:15; Acts 17:23; Isaiah 40:28; Romans 11:33; Job 9:10; 26:14; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Isaiah 55:9

^k Acts 17:25; Job 41:11

^l Titus 1:17; Colossians 1:15; John 1:18; Hebrews 1:3

^m John 1:1-3; Revelation 1:8; John 8:58; 1 Timothy 1:17; Genesis 21:33

ⁿ Jeremiah 23:24; Psalm 139:7-10; 1 Kings 8:27; Joshua 2:11; Matthew 6:6, 18; Acts 17:27-28

^o Daniel 4:34-35; Job 42:2; Psalm 135:6;

^p Isaiah 40:13-14; 41:22-23; 46:9-10; Romans 11:33-35; Psalm 33:11; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20; Job 28:12-28

^q Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Exodus 32:14; Genesis 6:6; Jeremiah 26:19; Amos 7:1-6; Jonah 3:10

^r Ephesians 1:11; Proverbs 16:33; 19:21; 21:1, 30; Amos 3:6; 2 Chronicles 3:12; Matthew 5:45; 6:26, 30; 10:29; 1 Samuel 2:6-7; 2:25; Daniel 4:35; Acts 17:26; Psalm 33:10; James 4:13-15; Lamentations 3:37-38; Exodus 4:11; Deuteronomy 32:39

^s Isaiah 45:21; 1 John 1:5; Habakkuk 1:13; Deuteronomy 32:4

^t Psalm 7:11; Deuteronomy 10:17; Exodus 23:7; Genesis 18:25; Isaiah 5:16; Romans 2:5-6

^u Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; Psalm 145:16-17; Exodus 34:6; Joel 2:12-14

^v Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8-10

^w Ephesians 1:7; 2:1-6; Romans 10:12; Ephesians 5:25-27

^x Exodus 34:6; Genesis 15:16; Psalm 57:10; Lamentations 3:22-23

^y 1 Timothy 2:4; Ezekiel 33:11; John 3:16; Romans 2:4

^z Psalm 145:17; 103; 104; Daniel 9:14; Mark 10:18; Psalm 34:8

^{aa} Rom. 11:22; Isaiah 30:30-33; Nahum 1:2, 5-6; Rev. 14:10-11, 16; Jer. 25:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:8-9; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:7; Jude 6-7; Eph. 5:6

Creation

We believe and teach that God, by His powerful word, *freely* created the universe in six days and it was *very good*.^a The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit acted together in the work of creation.^b Out of all living things, man (both male and female) was especially created in God's image.^c God granted him dominion over all lesser forms of life and even over the earth itself.^d

^a Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 33:6, 9

^b Genesis 1:2; 1:26; Acts 4:24; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10-12 (cf. 1:8)

^c Genesis 1:27

^d Genesis 1:26, 29-30; 2:19-20

Providence

We believe and teach the *whole creation* of God is still under His watchful and intervening care as He continues to sustain and rule over its *every detail*.^a Every event in nature and every action or decision are according to His eternal decree and purpose,^b but not in such a way as to make God the *source* of sin.^c In God's infinite wisdom and power all things work together for the highest benefit of His people and for the perfect display of His manifold glory.^d

^a Hebrews 1:3; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 15:27; 2 Peter 3:7; Psalm 103:19; 104:27-29; Matthew 6:26; 10:29; Daniel 4:34-35; Colossians 1:17; Ephesians 1:11

^b Job 34:14-15; Prov. 16:9, 33; 21:1; Psalm 135:6-7; 148:8; Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:26, 28; Col. 1:17; Ezra 6:22; Rom. 9:18; 1 Peter 2:8

^c Matthew 18:7; Exodus 9:34-35; Romans 9:19-20; James 1:13-14; Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 34:10

^d Genesis 50:20; Proverbs 16:4; Romans 8:28; Nahum 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Colossians 1:18; Esther 5:14

Man

We believe and teach Adam was the first man^a and was originally created in the image of God,^b was without sin,^c possessed a righteous standing,^d and enjoyed regular communion with God.^e Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and thereby experienced spiritual death and corruption in every dimension of his being.^f As God's sentence upon him for sin Adam also incurred the condemnation of physical and eternal death.^g As a *perpetual consequence* of Adam's one act of disobedience all mankind is conceived with a sinful will and nature, separated from God, and under the condemnation of death.^h Apart from the intervening grace of God,ⁱ fallen man relates to sin as a slave, God as an enemy, and the Gospel as foolishness.^j He does not possess the *desire* to truly love God, keep His laws, understand the Gospel, repent of sin, or trust in Christ.^k In the one sin of the fall, *all* people became so greatly estranged and opposed to God, that they could neither help themselves back to Him, nor be helped by any of their descendants, nor even by angels, nor by any other creature in heaven or on earth, nor could they be redeemed or reconciled to God; but would have been lost forever, had not God Himself mercifully interposed in their behalf and made provision for their restoration.^l

^a Genesis 2:7, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, etc.; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:12-14

^b Genesis 1:26-27

^c Genesis 1:31; 3:7, 11; Romans 5:12 (*sin entered*)

^d Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3

^e Genesis 2:15-3:11

^f Genesis 3:7, 11; 5:3; Titus 1:15; Ephesians 2:1-2; John 8:34; Isaiah 64:6

^g Genesis 2:16-17; 3:16, 17-19; 21-24; Romans 5:12-21 (especially v. 14); Revelation 20:14; 21:8

^h Job 14:4; 15:14-16; Psalm 51:5; Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 3:9-18; Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 5:12-21

ⁱ Ephesians 2:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; John 6:33; 1 Peter 1:3

^j Romans 6:1-23 (John 8:34; Ephesians 2:2); Romans 5:10 (Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21); 1 Corinthians 1:18 (Acts 17:18, 32)

^k Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 1 Peter 2:4-8; 4:4

^l Ephesians 2:3; Isaiah 43:26-28; Jeremiah 5:31; Zephaniah 1:18; Matthew 16:26; Hebrews 1:1-14; Isaiah 47:15; 59:16; 63:5

The Person and Work of Jesus Christ

We believe and teach the Lord Jesus Christ is the second person of the eternal God, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.^a He was sent by the Father into this world,^b taking on flesh through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in a virgin's womb,^c in order to show His chosen people the grace and truth of God,^d and then to provide their salvation by giving *Himself* as both their High Priest and their perfect sacrifice for sins.^e

Having been sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and being found in human form, He lived, being truly a man, in total dependence upon and faith in God.^f All throughout His life He was tempted and tried in all points as we are, and yet He was always and completely without sin.^g At His baptism by John in the Jordan River He was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the work He had been sent to accomplish.^h This anointing was without measure, so that, though a man, both He and His message were attested to men by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him.ⁱ

Subsequent to His anointing with the Spirit He returned triumphantly from great satanic temptations in the wilderness in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit.^j His message was penetrating, searching, and authoritative – demanding from men that they repent, believe, and worship.^k He came bringing the Kingdom of God in tow – binding and casting away the cosmic, demonic powers of this present darkness who through evil schemes and the fear of death had too long held men in bondage.^l He delivered the tortured from their demons, the downtrodden from the false teachings of the religiously prideful, made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.^m He raised the dead, cleansed the leper, healed the sick, dined with sinners, condemned not the adulteress and the thief, forgave sin, commanded obedience, revealed the Father; and dispensed everlasting life.ⁿ Truly it was said of Him that He proclaimed “liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” In Him God has judged for His people, and in Him the Lord of the Sabbath has visited them with the Jubilee year of His favor.^o

All His miracles were to teach and direct men unto Himself as *the answer* to all their needs.^p He rightly pointed men to Himself as the only *way* to God, the *truth* without which no man can be free, and the *life* that gives light to the world and delivers men from darkness.^q He relentlessly pursued the souls of men: He faithfully told the religious leader he stood in need of being born again, the rich man to sell his idol possessions, and the immoral woman to call for her husband.^r His words are Spirit and life because He is the faithful and true witness who spoke *nothing* but that which was given to Him by the Father, having obeyed His command as to what to say, what to speak.^s Therefore *He is truly the Prophet like Moses* and the *exact* representation of the Father. To see and to hear Him is to have seen and to have heard God Himself.^t

At the time appointed by the Father, Jesus *willingly submitted* Himself in *obedience* to the Father's will, laying down His life for the people whom God had given Him to redeem, and offering Himself personally as an atoning sacrifice for their sins.^u He did this by bearing in our place the *full* wrath of God that was against us because of sin.^v Having had our sins imputed to Him on the cross, He placed Himself under the just condemnation of the Father, and received in Himself the *due penalty* for our sin.^w By this sacrifice Jesus upholds the righteousness of God to punish sinners, and the immense love and faithfulness of God to justify the sinner.^x

Three days after His voluntary death on the cross, having been buried, Jesus rose bodily from the grave, appearing to many of His disciples before His ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father who had previously poured out His wrath against Him in our place.^y Therefore the resurrection affirms the *effectiveness* and *completeness* of Christ's work of atonement and *establishes* God's promise to save His people from their sin.^z Since He went to the cross as *our representative* before God we should have great encouragement and confidence knowing that God has loosed Him from the pangs of death and granted Him life everlasting.^{aa}

In His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on High, He acts as our Great High Priest.^{bb} As a *priest* He was chosen by God from among men and was *appointed* to offer gifts and sacrifice to God on their behalf.^{cc} His priesthood is *the only true priesthood there has ever been*, in which a man entered the Holy place of God, stood before His throne, and made an *effective* sacrifice for sin.^{dd} As the representative of His people, Jesus so effectively gained God's favor for them that He was invited *as their priest* to sit down with God on His throne in the Holy place, having perfectly finished the work of atonement which none but the God-man could accomplish.^{ee} From this exalted position at the right hand of the Father, the *man* Christ Jesus intercedes for us still, and will always represent us, having established an *eternal* priesthood and covenant.^{ff}

In the work of redemption God made Him who knew no sin to be sin, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.^{gg} This is accomplished by His sacrifice for us and by our participation in His exaltation to the right hand of the Father, whereby we share in His righteous standing before God and enjoy an open way to come freely into His presence.^{hh} In this connection the Scripture declares that *He was raised from the dead for our justification*, and therefore that we will be raised bodily from the dead unto everlasting life, that we are the adopted sons of God, that we are co-heirs with Christ, that we will judge the world and angels, that we will be like Him, and that we will see Him as He is.ⁱⁱ What a Savior!

As the risen, exalted, and triumphant *King*, the Lord Jesus Christ is conqueror over all His foes, having cast out the ruler of this world, having disarmed the spiritual hosts of this evil age, and having put them to open shame.^{jj} He was declared to be the Son of God in power by the work of the Holy Spirit in His resurrection.^{kk} Thus the Father justly appointed Him the heir of all things, enthroned Him in glory, and bestowed upon Him the only title which was *worthy* of Him, giving Him the name and position and glory that was His with the Father before the world was, the name of God Himself, '*the Lord*'.^{ll} Therefore at the name of Jesus *every* knee shall bow and *every* tongue confess His perfection, worth, and authority, to the glory of God.^{mmm} *Truly He is David's greater Son.*ⁿⁿ

In this enthronement He inaugurated His kingdom. He poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost to powerfully carry forward His work on earth^{oo} and to comfort, teach, and aid His disciples as He had promised them.^{pp} As King, He rules a willing people who love and obey Him, and a rebellious world that will one day bow by the force of His iron rod and scepter.^{qq} God has given this Great King, as head over all things, to the church.^{rr} And in this ministry the Lord Jesus Christ directs all things for their good and His glory, commanding us to go and make disciples of all nations, and assuring us of His presence unto the end of the age.^{ss}

He is truly therefore the Prophet like unto Moses, uttering the divine words that will be required of all people; the Great and Eternal High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, having entered for us into the heavens; and David's greater Son, ruling forever as God's Anointed.^{tt}

The Lord Jesus Christ is the full, perfect, and only provision for His people,^{uu} who are complete in Him, reconciled to God, and lacking nothing.^{vv} To add anything to Him and to His perfect work is to reject Him and to be none of His.^{ww}

^a John 1:1-2, 14; 20:28; Philippians 2:6

^b John 12:18; 20:21; Hebrews 10:5-7

^c Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:16; Philippians 2:5-7

^d Matthew 11:27; John 1:14, 16-18

^e 1 Peter 1:19; Colossians 1:19-22; Hebrews 7:26-27; 9:11-12, 28; 10:4-10, 14; 1 John 3:5

^f Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:8; Psalm 22:9-10, 19-22; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 4:2; 8:10; 13:56; 26:38; Luke 2:7, 40, 52; 23:46; 24:39; John 4:6; 7:5; 11:35; 19:28

^g Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 2 Corinthians 5:21

^h Matthew 3:16-17

ⁱ John 3:2; 3:34; John 14:10-11; Luke 24:19; Acts 2:22

^j Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:14

^k Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:15; John 5:22-24; Luke 14:26; Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22

^l Ephesians 6:11; Hebrews 2:15; 1 John 5:19

^m Matthew 8:16; 11:4-5, 23; Luke 11:14

ⁿ Luke 7:12-15; John 11:43-44; Matthew 8:1-3; 16; John 6:2; Luke 15:2; John 8:11; Luke 23:39-43 (cf. Matthew 27:38, 44); Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 28:20; John 15:17; 1:18; 14:9; 4:10, 14, 42; 5:21

^o Luke 4:14-21

^p John 6:1-35; 9:1-5; 11:14-26; *His miracles are often called signs, meaning they necessarily point to a truth beyond themselves.*

^q John 14:6; *the way*: John 10:9; Matthew 11:27; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 7:25; 10:19-22; *the truth*: John 1:14, 17; 8:32; 1 John 5:20; *the life*: John 1:4; 4:10; 5:21, 25-29; 6:33, 51, 57, 68; 10:28; 14:19; Acts 3:15; 1 John 5:11-12; Revelation 22:1

^r John 3:3; Luke 18:22; John 4:16

^s John 6:63, 68-69; Revelation 3:14; John 12:49-50

^t Acts 3:22; Colossians 2:9; John 14:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-3

^u Galatians 4:4-5; Isaiah 50:4-6; Hebrews 10:5-10; Matthew 26:39; Philippians 2:8; John 10:14-15; Galatians 1:4

^v Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 3:6; Isaiah 53:4-6; 10-11 ; Matthew 26:39 (cf. Psalm 75:7-8; Isaiah 51:22; Jer. 25:15; Revelation 14:10)

^w Isaiah 53:4-6; 10-11; Romans 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13

^x Proverbs 17:15; Romans 3:25-26; Micah 7:18-19

^y 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Luke 24:51-53; Acts 1:9; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12; John 17:19

^z Hebrews 8:1-6; 10:10-23; Acts 2:24-36

^{aa} 1 Corinthians 15:17; Romans 4:25; 5:10; 8:33-34; 1 Peter 1:3, 21; Hebrews 7:25-26; 10:19-21; Acts 5:31; 2:24; Romans 6:9

^{bb} Romans 8:34; Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:1-10; 7:15-17; 7:21; 7:22-8:1; John 17:24

^{cc} Hebrews 5:1-6

^{dd} Hebrews 7:18-19; 9:11-12; 9:24; 10:1-4, 11; Acts 13:38-39

^{ee} Isaiah 59:15-21; Hebrews 1:3-13; 2:9, 17; 9:13-14; 10:11-22; John 10:17

^{ff} Hebrews 7:15-17; 7:24-25; 9:12; 9:15; 13:20

^{gg} 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:12-21; Isaiah 53:4-6, 10

^{hh} Romans 5:19; Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 3:1; Philippians 2:9; Romans 4:25; 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 1:1; Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22

ⁱⁱ Romans 4:25; Isaiah 53:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24; Romans 8:16-17; Isaiah 53:12; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2

^{jj} Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20-22; John 12:31 (cf. Luke 11:20-22; Revelation 20:2-3); Colossians 2:15; Psalm 2:4-6

^{kk} Romans 1:4; 8:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:42-45; Hebrews 1:4-5

^{ll} Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 1:2; Philippians 2:9-11; John 17:5

^{mmm} Philippians 2:9-11; Psalm 2:8-12; 22:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:27-28

ⁿⁿ Luke 20:41-44; Romans 1:3-4; Revelation 5:5 (the *Lion* of the tribe of Judah); Genesis 49:8-12

^{oo} Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:32-33; 1:8

^{pp} John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:8, 13-15

^{qq} Ephesians 5:22-24; Titus 2:14; Revelation 12:5; 19:15; Psalm 2:8-9

^{rr} Ephesians 1:22

^{ss} Romans 8:28; 8:31-39; Matthew 28:19-20

^{tt} Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 4:14; 5:5-10; 9:24; Luke 1:32-33

^{uu} Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 5:7-10; 9:13-14, 25-28; 10:26-27; Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; Zephaniah 1:18; Matthew 16:26

^{vv} 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Col. 3:11; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:6 (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5); Colossians 1:13-14; Ephesians 1:3; 1 Cor. 3:21-22

^{ww} Galatians 5:2, 4-6

Election and Responsibility

We believe and teach that before the foundation of the world, the God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist, *determinatively* elected an innumerable multitude of people to eternal life through Jesus Christ as an act of His *free grace alone*.^a This choice was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, work, or merit.^b This fact promotes humility, meekness, love, prayer, praise, and trust in God.^c It also assures the Christian of the effectiveness of Gospel witness and missions, in that he knows that God, so long as He tarries, has chosen that some who are presently unbelieving will indeed finally come to Christ in faith.^d

We believe and teach it is also true that all men are responsible and free agents, acting according to their own volition.^e The blessings of salvation are made free to all men by the proclamation of the Gospel and it is their *duty* to respond in true repentance and faith.^f Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth so much as his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel.^g Men are *absolutely* accountable to God for their rebellion, impenitence, and rejection of Christ.^h

In the incomprehensible realm of God's sovereignty and ability these doctrines are *compatible* and *consistent* with one another.ⁱ

^a Acts 13:48; Romans 4:17; 8:28-30; 9:10-13; 11:7; Ephesians 1:3-10; 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13

^b Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Romans 9:11, 18; John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9

^c 1 Timothy 1:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:24; Romans 8:28

^d Acts 18:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:10; John 10:16; Matthew 13:24-30; 2 Peter 3:8-10

^e Joshua 24:15; Luke 23:24; Exodus 18:26; Judges 10:14

^f John 3:16; Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:7; John 6:37; Acts 3:19; 17:30; 20:21; Mark 1:14-15; 6:12

^g Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; Proverbs 1:24-30; Jeremiah 6:16; 7:24; Hosea 11:2, 7; John 5:40; 8:43-44

^h Deuteronomy 30:19; Exodus 9:34-35; John 5:40

ⁱ Genesis 50:20; Romans 9:18-21; 11:33; Exodus 9:34-35 (!)

Calling

We believe and teach that while it is true that the Spirit of God contends with all men,^a and to men who hear the word of God especially,^b there is also a more intensive work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man referred to as ‘calling’ that *always* results in salvation.^c To accomplish God’s redemptive purpose the Holy Spirit works effectively in conjunction with the Gospel of God, regenerating elect sinners and drawing them to repentance and faith with a conquering view of the true beauty and glory and worth of Christ.^d

^a Genesis 6:3; Romans 1:19

^b Nehemiah 9:30; Acts 7:51

^c Isaiah 55:10-11; John 6:44-45; 10:16; Acts 2:39; Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 9:15; Joel 2:32

^d 2 Corinthians 4:6; 5:16; John 1:1-18

Regeneration

We believe and teach that *in order to be saved, sinners must be born again*. This new birth is called regeneration.^a This one act is spoken of in various ways in Scripture. It is a mighty working of the Spirit of God whereby a man is set free from the powerful rule of sin and is given a new heart by which he now loves the God he used to hate, and hates the sin he used to love.^b It is a miracle and therefore brought about wholly by God in a manner above our comprehension.^c It is a necessary prerequisite for true faith and repentance.^d It is God’s making a man into a new creature, causing the old things to pass away.^e It is the Lord’s opening of a heart to divine truth.^f It is Spiritual birth in which new life is given where once was none.^g It is the replacement of a hard, stony heart with one of sensitive flesh.^h It is the Spiritual crucifixion and burial of the old man bound in sin and the resurrection of a new man who lives unto God.ⁱ It is God’s freeing a slave of sin and Satan, making him a slave of God and righteousness.^j It is Spiritual circumcision in which the wickedness of a man’s heart is removed and he is made pleasing to God in the inner man.^k As the direct result of this change a man has a new nature. He is a different person from the inside out.^l It moves a man from the dark, worldly realm of the flesh into the Spiritual, heavenly realm of light.^m Its proper evidence is repentance, faith, and newness of life.ⁿ

^a John 3:3, 5-6; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 3:9; Galatians 6:15; Titus 3:5

^b Romans 6:6-7, 17-18, 22; John 8:31-36

^c John 3:8; Mark 4:26-29; Ecclesiastes 11:5

^d Matthew 7:15-20; 12:33; 16:17; 23:26; 2 Timothy 2:25-26

^e 2 Corinthians 5:17-18; Ephesians 4:22-24

^f Acts 16:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6

^g James 1:18; John 5:24; 1 John 3:9; John 3:6; 4:14; 2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 2:4-5

^h Ezekiel 36:22-32; Jeremiah 31:33-34; 2 Corinthians 3:1-3

ⁱ Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:20; 6:14; Colossians 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:15

^j Romans 6:6-7, 14, 16-23

^k Acts 7:51; Deuteronomy 30:6; Philippians 3:3; Ephesians 2:11; Colossians 2:10-11, 13; Romans 2:28-29

^l Matthew 12:33-37; 7:15-20

^m Romans 7:5; Romans 8:5-9; Colossians 2:20; 3:1; Hebrews 12:22; John 17:14, 16; 1 John 4:6; Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; 5:7-14; Colossians 1:12-13; Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:9

ⁿ Romans 6:4, 6; Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 15:9; Galatians 5:5; Ephesians 2:8-9

Repentance and Faith

We believe and teach repentance and faith are *both a gift from God and an act of man’s volition*.^a Repentance is usually described today as a change of life, whereby a man ceases his life of sin and embraces the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that definition more properly belongs to ‘conversion.’^b Repentance and faith are two simultaneous and necessary aspects of true conversion.^c Repentance is the *negative*, sin-oriented side of this change, representing a ‘letting go’, or sorrowful, often costly denunciation of evil opinions and attitudes regarding sin, righteousness, self, God, and the person of Jesus Christ.^d

Faith is the *positive*, Godward side of conversion, resulting in a person’s embracing the truth of God as revealed by His Holy Spirit in the Gospel. It is manifested chiefly in a personal trust and confidence in the sufficiency and willingness of Jesus Christ to save the sinner.^e Both repentance and faith are inward changes that *inevitably* appear in the outward, visible life of a person.^f *They are not something done once at the beginning of the Christian life*, but are ongoing graces, *continually descriptive of the Christian’s heart and mind*.^g

^a John 1:12; 6:29, 37; 7:37; Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30

^b 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 Corinthians 16:15; Acts 15:3; 20:21

^c Acts 20:21; Acts 15:3; Romans 16:5; 1 Timothy 3:6

^d 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Zechariah 12:10-14; Ruth 1:21; Luke 14:25-33; Hebrews 6:1; 2 Corinthians 5:16

^e Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 7:25; Acts 16:31

^f Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20; James 1:12; 2:14-26; 1 John 1:7; 2:4-6; 2:15-16; 2:29; 3:4-10; 3:14, 17; 4:8; 4:20; 5:18

^g 1 Corinthians 13:13; Galatians 2:20; Matthew 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Justification

We believe and teach justification occurs *immediately* when a person truly repents of sin and exercises faith in God, trusting in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone to intercede with God for him.^a Justification is an everlasting,^b judiciary verdict of God^c on the believer's behalf based *solely* upon the merits of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.^d In justification the believer is declared to be as righteous as God is in the sight of His holy law.^e This legal verdict is made possible in the courts of a just Judge^f because it proceeds upon (1) Christ having perfectly satisfied the judicial demands of God's law by His substitutionary death of atonement,^g and (2) the imputation to the believer of His divine righteousness, made possible in His resurrection and exaltation to the Father's right hand as our representative High Priest and elder brother, with whom we share an inheritance.^h For this reason justification can never be the result of our works or merit.ⁱ The believer, once justified, can never be more or less justified.^j

^a Genesis 15:6; John 5:24; Romans 5:1; 4:5; Acts 15:8-9 (cf. Acts 10:44-48 God used Spirit baptism with the sign of tongues to testify to Peter of His prior approval and acceptance of these Gentiles *before* their water baptism.)

^b Romans 4:8; Hebrews 10:10-18; Jeremiah 31:34

^c Romans 3:21-26; 8:33-34 (*justify is the opposite of condemn*)

^d Romans 3:23-24; 1 Timothy 2:5; Acts 4:12; Romans 5:9, 19; 1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:4-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21

^e 1 Corinthians 5:21; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-18; 1 Corinthians 1:30 (cf. Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 3:3; Revelation 4:11; 5:12)

^f Proverbs 17:15; Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 7:9-10; Job 37:23; Romans 4:5; Romans 8:33

^g Romans 8:1; 3:26; Isaiah 53:1-12; 1 John 1:7, 9 (He is . . . *just* to forgive us our sins); Luke 22:42; John 19:30; Hebrews 10:14

^h Romans 4:25; 5:10; 8:34; Ephesians 1:1-6; Hebrews 7:15-28; 8:1-4, 6; 9:12

ⁱ Romans 3:27-28; 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9

^j Romans 4:8; 5:15-19; Hebrews 10:10, 14

Sanctification

We believe and teach *all Christians* are progressively conformed to the image of Christ.^a All true believers direct their will and affections toward this purpose,^b putting to death the desires and deeds of the flesh by the enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit^c as God's Word is more fully understood and applied.^d The progress of the believer in sanctification is not necessarily at a steady pace,^e but the overall quality of his life is nonetheless *increasingly and positively transformed* to that of Christ's.^f Despite the progress and true change continually advancing in the believer in this way, sinlessness will never be attained in this life, though it is a certainty in the new heavens and the new earth.^g

^a Philippians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:28-30

^b 2 Peter 1:5-9; Matthew 7:15-22; 6:19-22; 13:44-46; Romans 8:4

^c Romans 8:13-15; Galatians 5:16-17

^d Romans 12:1-2; 2 Peter 1:2-4; John 8:31-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:16

^e Proverbs 24:16; Revelation 2:5; Galatians 4:18-19; 5:7-8

^f Philippians 3:12; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2:14

^g Philippians 3:12-16; 1 John 1:8; Hebrews 2:11; 2 Peter 3:13

Perseverance

We believe and teach all who are chosen, called, regenerated, and justified shall persevere in faith, overcome the world, and never finally fall away.^a Perseverance is a necessary element to Biblical salvation.^b Apostasy is a real danger to those who profess faith in Christ.^c The true believer is a spiritually violent person, pressing his way through all that would keep him from Christ.^d Perseverance is not *primarily* a human accomplishment but a loving and careful work of the triune God through the Son's diligence as the Good Shepherd and His intercession as our High Priest, whose petitions sustain our faith and understand our weaknesses;^e the Father's faithfulness to cleanse us from all our idols, to be our God, to make us His people, to cause us to walk in His statutes, to keep us from circumstances beyond our ability, to make us fear Him, and to discipline us for our good;^f and the Holy Spirit's helpful intercession for us in prayer according to the will of God,^g His daily guidance and leading,^h as well as His ongoing work within the believer by which He creates, sustains, nourishes, and strengthens a living, growing, transforming, and enduring faith in all true believers.ⁱ

^a Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; Luke 8:15; 21:19; 1 John 4:4; 5:4-5; Heb. 6:7-9, 12; 10:36; 12:1; Matt. 7:24-25; Gal. 6:9; 1 Tim. 6:10

^b Ezekiel 18:24; Matthew 15:22; John 8:31; 15:4-14; Acts 11:23; 13:43; Romans 2:6-8; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 15:2, 58; Galatians 5:1-4; 6:9; Colossians 1:22-23; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 3:14; James 1:12; Revelation 21:7

^c Mark 4:3-8; 2 Timothy 4:10; 2 John 8; Hebrews 6:1-12; 10:19-39

^d Matthew 11:12; 5:27-30; 10:22; 18:7-9; 19:23-30; Luke 16:16; 9:62; 11:52; 13:23-24; 14:25-33; John 6:60-61, 66-69; Acts 14:22; Proverbs 2:1-5; Habakkuk 3:17-18

^e Jude 24; John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:34b-39; Heb. 2:18; Luke 22:31-34; 1 Peter 5:8-11; Psalm 23:1-6; 37:23-24; Heb. 4:15

^f 1 Corinthians 1:8; Ezekiel 36:22-28; 2 Corinthians 3:3; John 10:29; 17:11-12, 15; Romans 8:31-32; Jeremiah 32:40; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Haggai 1:9-10

^g Romans 8:26-28

^h John 14:16-17; Acts 15:28; 16:6; 20:22-23; Romans 7:6; 8:4, 14; Galatians 5:16, 22-25; Ephesians 5:18; Philippians 1:19

ⁱ 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:8-12; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:14

The Holy Spirit, Gifts, and the Miraculous

We believe and teach the Holy Spirit is the third person of the eternal God, one with the Father and the Son.^a He indwells all true believers as a guarantee of their redemption.^b His daily help and guidance is a necessary part of the believer's sanctification and perseverance and is evident in the life of every Christian.^c Believers are commanded to walk by the Spirit and not to grieve or quench the Spirit.^d Believers are members of a glorious, life-giving covenant that is a ministry of the Spirit, written on the heart.^e These truths are *experienced and known realities* in the life of the Christian.^f We also believe that a deeper relationship with God through the person of the Holy Spirit is always available to the believer and is an appropriate subject of prayer.^g

We believe and teach that subsequent to conversion, and as distinct from the regular work of the Holy Spirit in the life of every Christian, the Spirit gives various gifts and abilities to all believers for ministry, witness, and the edification of the church.^h All the gifts of the Spirit described in the New Testament are operative today and are designed to build up the church to the fullness of Christ and to empower it to fulfill its calling and mission.ⁱ Although God has worked in special and unique ways in the church at various times in her history (the ministry of some of the Apostles being an example), the Bible gives *no evidence* that *any* Spiritual gift has ceased or that the Church will so mature in this age as to no longer need the gifts which are distributed by the Holy Spirit for her growth and maturity.^j God is sovereign in the distribution of these gifts, giving to each as He sees fit, and giving different gifts or combinations of gifts to all believers.^k Christians should desire and seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts that are of the greatest benefit to the church.^l No one gift is a sign of being spiritually superior to others.^m This means the gifted pastor is not necessarily more godly than the sister with the gift of hospitality.

We believe and teach that over and above Spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit sometimes will especially fill, empower, and anoint believers.ⁿ This special work of the Spirit is also an appropriate subject of prayer, *provided* we seek not an experience, but the will and glory of God and the true advance of His agenda in our life and the world.^o We believe that God still occasionally performs miraculous signs and wonders in order to testify to the presence of His kingdom among a people or to help His people in desperate need.^p

^a Genesis 1:2; 1:26-27; 2 Corinthians 3:18

^b Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

^c Romans 8:5-9, 13-14; Galatians 5:18, 22-25

^d Galatians 5:16, 25; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19

^e 2 Corinthians 3:3-11; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:33; Isaiah 54:13; John 6:44-45; 1 Thessalonians 4:9

^f Romans 5:5; 8:16; John 14:17; 1 John 2:20, 27; Acts 15:28; 16:6; 20:22-23

^g Luke 11:13

^h 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; 14:5-12, 26; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 2:19; Romans 15:2, 14; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8

^j Acts 8:17; 5:12; 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12; Acts 2:14-39

^k 1 Corinthians 12:11; 12:4-11, 12-30

^l 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1-4, 12

^m 1 Corinthians 12:21-26

ⁿ *Also referred to in the Scriptures as 'baptism in/with the Holy Spirit'.* Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:2, 4; 4:8, 31; 8:14-17; 9:17; 13:9, 52; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; 19:2-6

^o Luke 11:13; Acts 8:18-22; 1 Timothy 6:5; 3 John 9; John 5:44; 1 John 5:14; John 14:13; 15:7

^p Acts 10:45-48; 15:7-11; 12:5-17; James 5:14-15; Galatians 3:5

Assurance

We readily confess the exceeding difficulty of briefly stating so complex an issue as the assurance of the believer. There are, however, several components of assurance that we want to summarize. It should be stated that by assurance we are not attempting to give evidence that Christ is able to save, that is assumed. We are rather attempting to clarify how a

person may be sure and have peace that they personally belong to Jesus Christ. The following is a much adapted statement taken from the 1689 London Baptist Confession:

Although many men may profess faith and claim to know God, yet they exhibit a pattern of life *governed* by sin, such hopes are a vain deception, a presumption upon grace, arise from a superficial faith, and will perish with them.^a Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, and who endeavor to walk in all good conscience before Him, may be *certainly* assured in this life that they *are* in a state of grace, and may *rejoice* in the hope of the glory of God.^b Such a hope will never put them to shame.^c This assurance is not merely a persuasion by theological inference, but is obtained by the evidences of the inward and transforming work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the definite promises made in the Scriptures.^d

While a great part of the believer's personal assurance is related to the inward credibility and reality of his walk with God, the greatest and most certain component of this assurance is based upon the Holy Spirit's unambiguous testimony to the believer that *he is indeed a child of God*, by which God Himself, through the person of the Spirit, sets His seal upon the believer as His own and assures the Christian that he has truly been adopted into God's family and may confidently call Him, 'Father'.^e

Assurance is *not* so joined to the essence of faith that it is an *automatic experience*.^f A true believer may wait a long time and fight with many difficulties before he possesses it.^g Yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things that are freely given to him by God,^h he may attain this assurance by using the means of grace in the right way.ⁱ Therefore it is the duty of every one to give the utmost diligence to make his calling and election sure.^j Because we are certain that this is God's revealed will, God should be petitioned by prayer in this matter, that the believer might be granted true and real assurance so that he would know for himself that God has chosen him *personally* as an everlasting inheritance.^k The effect of assurance for the believer is that his heart is enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness for obedience.^l

True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in various ways shaken, diminished, or intermitted. This may be because of their negligence in preserving it,^m or by their falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit,ⁿ by some sudden or forceful temptation,^o or by God's withdrawing the light of His countenance and causing even those who fear Him to walk in temporary darkness and to have no light.^p Yet believers are never left without the seed of God and life of faith, the love of Christ and the brethren, true sincerity of heart, and a genuine concern for the things of God.^q Out of these things, by the operation of the Spirit, their assurance can in due time be revived,^r and in the meantime the presence of these graces preserves them from utter despair.^s

^a Proverbs 14:2; Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:5-6; Acts 8:9-23; John 5:26; 8:34

^b 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 1:8-9; 1 John 5:13; Romans 5:1-2

^c Romans 5:5; 1 John 1:9; John 3:16-18

^d 2 Cor. 13:5; Galatians 6:4-5; 5:16-17, 22; Romans 8:9, 14; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; Hebrews 6:17-20; 10:23; Psalm 111:1-10; 1 John 1:9

^e 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 13:5; 5:5; 1 John 4:13; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 5:5; 8:15-16; John 16:26-27

^f 1 John 5:13; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Corinthians 13:5

^g 2 Peter 1:10-11; Galatians 3:1-6; Isaiah 50:10; Psalm 77:1-12

^h Romans 8:14-16; 1 John 4:13; Galatians 5:22-23, 18; John 15:4, 7; James 2:17-18; 1 John 2:4-6, 10, 19, 23-24; 3:9-10, 14, 17, 24; 4:7; 5:18; 1 Peter 1:5; John 6:40

ⁱ 1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11-12; 2 Peter 1:3-11

^j 2 Peter 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 6:11

^k Colossians 2:1-3; Hebrews 6:11-12; Ephesians 1:16-23; 3:14-21; Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13

^l Ephesians 1:3-2:22 (cf. 3:1; 3:14; 4:1-3; 5:2; 6:10); Romans 14:17 (cf. 14:13-16; 14:18-19); Romans 12:12; 2 Peter 1:3-4, 7; Ephesians 3:17-18; 4:16; 5:2; Colossians 3:16; 1 Samuel 12:24; Psalm 119:32; 2 Corinthians 3:12; 1 John 3:3; Isaiah 40:3

^m Song of Songs 5:2, 3, 6; 2 Chronicles 29:11; Proverbs 1:32; Hebrews 6:11

ⁿ Ephesians 4:30; Psalm 51 (especially vv. 8, 11, 12, 14)

^o Psalm 77:7-9; 31:22

^p Isaiah 50:10; Psalm 30:7; Job 1:1-42:17; Psalm 88:9-14

^q 1 John 5:10; 5:18; 3:9; Luke 22:32; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2:17; Colossians 3:3, 22; Romans 5:11; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:21

^r 1 Peter 5:10; 1 John 3:19; Psalm 42:5-6, 11

^s Job 19:25; Philippians 1:6; Jude 24; Lamentations 3:1-33

The Church

We believe and teach the local church is a visible and partial expression of the everlasting heavenly Church, the body and bride of Christ,^a against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.^b It is under the ultimate authority of Christ *alone*.^c It is a

local community^d of those who have repented from sin and believed in Christ *on the Gospel's terms* and whose life manifests a holy and Godward direction and a sincere love for the brethren.^e In every church qualified elders (a plurality where possible) are appointed to serve Christ by exercising *truly pastoral care* for His body^f. Qualified deacons are to especially assist the elders and serve the saints as genuine needs arise.^g

We believe and teach it is our duty to walk with each other in all humility and brotherly love,^h to watch over each other's walk; to stir up one another to love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as we have opportunity;ⁱ and as the case requires, to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another, according to the rules of Jesus Christ.^j Moreover, we are obligated to sympathize with each other in all conditions, both inward and outward, which God, in His providence, may bring us into.^k We are to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings and infirmities;^l and particularly to pray for one another, especially that the Scriptures and the Gospel might be blessed to the edification and comfort of each other's souls, and for the gathering in of others to Christ, besides those who are already gathered.^m

We believe and teach, therefore, that the Christians who gather together as a church ought to know one another, so that all the duties of love might be fulfilled both physically and spiritually, and so that the church might grow in likemindedness under Christ.ⁿ *A church should not consist of such a multitude as cannot have particular knowledge of one another.* Each member of the church is specially gifted by the Holy Spirit to edify the body.^o The church is to be a gathering in which believers are genuinely helped by one another in their Christian experience.^p A local church *must recognize and fellowship* with the universal body of Christ both individually and as represented in other true churches, not willfully neglecting any whom Christ has made our brother or sister.^q

^a Hebrews 12:22-24; Colossians 3:3-4; Phil. 3:20; Rev. 21:2, 9; 19:17; 22:17; Ephesians 5:22-33; John 3:29; Matt. 25:1-13; Mark 2:19

^b Matthew 16:18; Revelation 20:6 (cf. John 5:25-29; Ephesians 2:4-6); Jeremiah 15:20; Luke 22:31-32 (cf. 1 Peter 5:8-9)

^c Ephesians 5:22-33; Matthew 28:18; Jude 25; Colossians 1:18

^d Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47; Colossians 3:16-17

^e Matthew 7:21-27; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19; Romans 8:14-18; Galatians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 5:4-8, 11, 13; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 John 3:14-17; John 13:34-35

^f Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:14, 16; 5:17; Titus 1:5-16; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28; Jeremiah 3:15

^g 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7

^h Philippians 2:5-11; John 15:12; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:5-7, 22; 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:5

ⁱ Matthew 18:15-20; Luke 17:3; 1 John 5:16; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25

^j Luke 17:3; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; 2:15; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; Matthew 18:25-20

^k Hebrews 4:15; 10:32-34; Ephesians 4:1-2; 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; Acts 2:45; 4:32, 34-35

^l Ephesians 4:1-2; Colossians 3:13; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 4:10, 14-18

^m Galatians 6:2; James 5:16; Colossians 1:3, 9; 4:2-3; 12-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:11; Hebrews 13:18; Matthew 6:7-13; John 17:1-26; Ephesians 6:18-20

ⁿ Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:16-17; Hebrews 10:24-25; Romans 15:14; Philippians 2:4; Romans 15:5-6

^o 1 Corinthians 12:7, 12-31; Romans 12:3-8; 15:14; Ephesians 4:7-16

^p Hebrews 10:24-25; Colossians 3:16-17; Galatians 6:2; Romans 15:14

^q Romans 15:7; 16:1-16; 21-23; 1 Peter 2:17; 3:8 (cf. 1 Peter 1:1); Acts 18:26; 2 Cor. 7:31; 12:15-16; Heb. 13:2; 1 Thess. 2:19-20

Baptism

We believe and teach Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer into water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.^a It is an emblematic initiatory ordinance of the church and functions as a public identification with Jesus Christ and His church.^b Baptism is an act of obedience *symbolizing* the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior;^c the death and burial of the old life of sin and the resurrection of the new life with a Godward focus (this is regeneration);^d and the washing away of sin.^e

^a John 3:23; Acts 8:38; Matthew 28:19

^b Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36-38; 9:18-19; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 31-34; 18:8; Romans 6:3-5 (*all of us*); Col. 2:12 (*having been*)

^c Colossians 2:12; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38 (cf. Acts 2:36)

^d Romans 6:1-11; 17-19

^e Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5

The Lord's Supper

We believe and teach Christians must regularly partake of the Lord's Supper.^a As part of a larger meal,^b set apart by the symbols of breaking and eating the bread and by drinking the cup, believers commemorate the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross as well as His resurrection and ascension.^c Through the Lord's Supper they also affirm and celebrate their oneness,^d their separation from the world unto Christ,^e their belief in the resurrection and in the consummation of the kingdom of God in which Christ will one day sup with them,^f and their present fellowship with Christ in the New

Covenant.^g The Lord's Supper should be taken in a heart-attitude of reverence, love, fellowship and edification.^h It is free to all who obey the Gospel.ⁱ

^a 1 Corinthians 11:18, 25, 33; Acts 20:7

^b Mathew 26:26; Mark 14:12; John 6:4; Exodus 12:8; 1 Corinthians 11:21, 22, 33; Jude 12 (cf. other covenant meals: Genesis 26:30; 31:44-55; 2 Samuel 3:17-21; John 2:1-11 [cf. Malachi 2:14]; Exodus 24:9-11; Deuteronomy 14:23-26)

^c Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (*proclaim His death . . . until He comes*)

^d 1 Corinthians 10:17

^e 1 Corinthians 10:21-22

^f Mark 14:25; Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:16, 18, 30; 14:15; Revelation 19:9

^g 1 Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:17, 19-20 (cf. Deuteronomy 14:23-26; Matthew 18:20)

^h 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 26, 27-30; Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Hebrews 10:25

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 5:4-8, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (cf. Mark 14:24)

Missions and Evangelism

We believe and teach a zeal for the glory and the honor and the worth of Jesus Christ is the primary motive for evangelistic witness, followed by a love for our fellow man.^a *These priorities are never to be reversed.* All believers, as part of the Church of Christ, are subject to the commission of our Lord: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."^b Therefore, and as evidenced in every New Testament account of missionary activity, so-called '*evangelism*' is *not* the call of the Great Commission, *but rather making disciples of Christ* who *actually* practice and observe all that Jesus has commanded.^c Therefore it is also a priority in evangelism to unite converts with local churches in which they can grow in grace, renew their minds, and be built up for the work of ministry.^d

While it is not the responsibility of every Christian to travel to the unreached people groups and proclaim the Gospel for the first time,^e every Christian is subject to the command of Christ "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations."^f This makes apathy towards evangelism (whether at home or abroad) disobedience to Christ and indifference towards the glory of God.^g Ministries such as those exercised in the New Testament by the Apostles and others, in which the Gospel is sounded forth in communities with no self-sustaining Gospel witness are the concern of every Christian.^h We are to send and prayerfully support missionaries out of obedience to the Lord, out of our desire to see Him receive all those sheep who are rightfully His, and out of our love for those who so desperately need to be reconciled to God.ⁱ We look to send *only* those whose character we can vouch for, who are gifted as teachers and ministers, tested in the faith, and divinely called to the task.^j

We believe and teach that evangelism is always to be basically *incarnational*. This is evident to us through the many kinds of commands and expectations laid upon Christians in the New Testament.^k Incarnational (in-carnate = in-the flesh) means that by and large we are to be the aroma of Christ in the communities in which we have been placed, walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, and always looking for opportunities to share the Gospel with the unbelieving.^l Moreover, the fact that when God chose to speak to His people, whether in the Old Testament or New, whether by prophets, His Son, or apostles, He almost universally chose *a person* through whom to speak and *live in the midst of a people*,^m has profound implications for the burden that individual Christians should have for evangelistic witness in their own communities in the *day to day* activities of life.ⁿ

It is the duty of every Christian to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers into His harvest, which laborers we are.^o It is our earnest desire and prayer that we might always labor and be effective in the worldwide harvest of Christ, doing our part for the ingathering of God's elect, scattered among the nations.^p

^a John 17:24-26; Habakkuk 2:14 (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Matthew 28: 18-20)

^b Matthew 28:18-20

^c Acts 2:41, 42-47; 4:4, 32-37; 5:11-14; 5:42; 6:5, 7-10, 15; 8:12-17, 40; 9:22-25; 31; 10:48; 11:19-26; 14:21-23; 14:26-28; 15:36, 41; 16:12, 18, 40; etc. 18:11; 19:8-10 (!); 20:18-36; 1 Corinthians 1:17; *All of Paul's epistles except Romans and Colossians are written to churches he founded!*

^d Acts 14:19-23; Titus 1:5; *Consider that 1,2 Thessalonians were written within a few months of each other, and in only a short period after the Gospel was first preached there!*

^e Acts 8:1, 4-5, 25; 11:1; 13:1-3; 14:27; 16:1-3; 18:27; Romans 15:18-24; 16:1-15; 1 Corinthians 15:5-6; Philippians 4:10, 14-20

^f Luke 24:47

^g Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; John 10:7-17; 17:20-24; Revelation 5:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:5-6

^h Romans 15:18-24; 15:30-32; 16:2; Philippians 1:19; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4

ⁱ Luke 24:47; 10:2; Matthew 9:37-38; Philippians 1:19; 4:10, 14-20; Colossians 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:18-20; John 10:16; Acts 16:9-10

^j Acts 11:21-26, 28; 13:1-3; 15:37 (cf. 12:25; 13:13); 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 John 9-11; Titus 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:5; Eph. 5:11; 3 John 3-8

^k Matthew 5:2-16; 5:21-7:27; Mark 9:50; Romans 12:14-21; 13:1-14; 15:2; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 7:17-24; 12:1-14:40; 16:1-3; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:15; Colossians 4:5; Ephesians 5:1, 8; 1 Timothy 2:2

^l 1 Corinthians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:10; 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2

Thessalonians 1:11; Philemon 6; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 22-23

^m Isaiah 6:7-9; 8:11-13; Jeremiah 15:19; Ezekiel 2:6-8; Matthew 10:25; John 1:14, 18; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 20:18-36; 1 John 1:1-3

ⁿ Matthew 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:21; 1 Corinthians 7:24; Philippians 2:14-15; Titus 1:16; Ephesians 5:23-6:9; Colossians 3:17-24; 1 Peter 3:1-2; 2:13-17; 4:11; Romans 13:1, 13; 1 Timothy 2:2; Titus 3:1; James 3:13; 1:26; Colossians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 10:31

^o Matthew 9:37-38; 10:1-11:1; Luke 10:1-21

^p 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Psalm 96:3, 10; 106:47; Malachi 1:11, 14b; 1 Timothy 3:16; John 10:16; Acts 18:10

The Return of Christ

We believe and teach the blessed hope,^a that at the end of this age the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth personally, visibly, physically, and suddenly, in power and great glory,^b and that He will raise the dead,^c gather His elect,^d judge the nations,^e subdue for His people their final enemy,^f create both a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells,^g consummate His Kingdom,^h and reign with His people in that new world to mutually enjoy His eternal Kingdom.ⁱ

^a Titus 2:11-14; 2 Peter 3:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

^b Acts 1:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Luke 12:35-40; 21:34; Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31-46

^c John 5:28-29; 6:40; Romans 8:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Isaiah 26:19

^d Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27; Matthew 25:32-33

^e 2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 2:16; Isaiah 2:4; Obadiah 15-16; Psalm 96:10; Revelation 20:4; Matthew 25:34-46

^f Revelation 20:1-15; 1 Corinthians 15:54-55; 15:25-28; Zephaniah 3:14-20

^g Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-8; Romans 8:19-21

^h 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Corinthians 15:24; John 18:36; Revelation 21:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Colossians 1:19-20

ⁱ 2 Peter 1:11; James 2:5; Hebrews 12:28; Colossians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21

Death, the Resurrection, and Eternity

We believe and teach that when the Christian dies he passes *immediately* into the blessed presence of Christ in Heaven,^a there to enjoy conscious, prayerful fellowship with the Savior^b until the day of his bodily resurrection and the glorious transformation of that body into a body like Christ's.^c The saved will then forever dwell in everlasting blessedness and joyful fellowship with the great triune God in the new creation *to the praise of the glory of His mercy*.^d When the sinner dies he is *immediately* consigned to conscious punishment in Hell,^e there to await his bodily resurrection and appearance before the judgment of God^f in which he will be eternally cast away from the presence of the Lord to be consciously punished forever in the torment of God's fierce and unmixed wrath *to the praise of the glory of His wrath and power*.^g

^a Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21-23; Romans 8:38-39; Acts 7:55-60

^b Matthew 22:32; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-10; Luke 16:25

^c 1 Corinthians 15:13-24, 50-57; Romans 8:23; 1 John 3:2

^d Revelation 21:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Romans 9:23

^e Mark 9:47-48; Luke 16:22-26; *sometimes Scripture refers to this as Hades* Matthew 11:23; Revelation 20:13-14

^f 2 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 20:11-15; Romans 2:5; Acts 17:30-31; John 5:28-29

^g Romans 9:1-3; Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:12, 15; 21:8; Mark 9:43; Romans 9:22 (cf. Rev. 19:21); Nahum 3:19

The Old Covenant

We believe and teach God gave the Old Covenant (the Ten Commandments and their later expansion in the 'book of the law')^a to the largely unregenerate nation of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.^b It was a temporary,^c conditional^d covenant made up of a single, unified law-code,^e signified by its varied Sabbaths (days, months, seasons, and years).^f It promised national, earthly blessings for obedience and threatened curses for disobedience.^g Though the Law offered even eternal life upon the impossible condition of perfect obedience unto God in all respects, the *purpose* of this Old/Law Covenant was never to grant eternal life,^h but rather (1) to govern the politics, life, and worship of the physical nation of Israel as a guardian or manager, teaching them about transgression until Christ should come as the fulfillment and goal of all of God's covenant promises and redemptive purposes, ushering in the blessings of Abraham to the nations;ⁱ (2) to be a persistent testimony of God's righteousness and standard, thereby increasing Israel's transgression and manifesting the extent and depth of their depravity and bondage to sin;^j and (3) to foreshadow the person, work, and office of the Lord Jesus Christ and the nature of His New Covenant.^k The Old Covenant, as a covenant, was comprised wholly of *shadows*, pointing ultimately to the person of Jesus and His New Covenant. When Jesus Christ came, grace and truth came with Him, and the Old/Law Covenant that God made with the people of Israel through Moses began to come to an end, and is now finished.^l We believe that the Old Covenant once made with Israel, and the Old Testament Scriptures progressively

given to Israel, are distinct.^m While the Old Covenant is abrogated as a covenant, what Christians call the Old Testament is still regarded as part of Scripture, able to make one wise for salvation, and is profitable to equip the man of God.ⁿ

^a 10 Commandments - Exodus 31:18; 34:28; 40:20; Deuteronomy 4:13(!); 9:9; 9:11; 9:15; 10:5, 8(!); 1 Kings 8:9, 21; Hebrews 9:1-4; Galatians 4:24; *book of the law* – Exodus 21:1-23:33; Deuteronomy 29:1; 31:26; (1st commandment of no other Gods: Ex. 22:20; 34:14; Lev. 20:24; Deut. 10:12); (5th commandment to honor father and mother: Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 19:3; Deut. 21:18-21); etc.

^b Exodus 32:9; 33:3; Deuteronomy 9:6; 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Acts 7:39-43, 51; John 8:44; Hebrews 8:7-12; Deut. 5:1-3; Ex. 31:18

^c Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 18:15-19; Luke 16:16; Galatians 3:15-4:7

^d Exodus 19:5; 23:22; Deuteronomy 11:27; 28:1; Jeremiah 7:23-34; 2 Kings 17:6-20; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21

^e Deut. 29:1; Ex. 24:7; 2 Cor. 3:2-7; Gal. 5:3; James 2:10-11; *the common three-fold division of the law into civil, ceremonial, and moral aspects is absent from the Scriptures and would have been a foreign concept to a Jew who received the whole law as a single covenant; it is a system-driven invention of men.*

^f Exodus 31:12-17; Gal. 4:10; *Note the similarities between the sign of circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the sign of Sabbath (Exodus 31:12-18; 20:12): “You shall keep/observe” Gen17:9/Ex31:13; “Me and you and your descendants/the sons of Israel” Gen17:9/Ex31:17; “be circumcised/observe the Sabbath” Gen17:11/Ex31:14; “throughout your generations” Gen17:12/Ex31:13; “sign . . . between me and you” Gen17:11/31:13; “everlasting/perpetual covenant” Gen17:13/Ex31:16; “uncircumcised/does any work . . . cut off” Gen17:14/Ex31:14; “servant to be circumcised/keep the Sabbath Gen17:12/Ex20:10; the sign is given at the time of the covenant Gen17:1-9/Ex31:18; Note the way that the feast days/ceremonies are considered special Sabbaths: Lev.23:3; Ex. 31:16; Lev. 23:5; Ex. 12:14; Lev. 23:6-8; Ex. 12:17; Lev. 23:10-14; 23:15-21; 23:23-25; 16:29, 31; 23:33-44; 2 Chron. 2:4; Lev. 25:2-7; 25:8-12, 20, 21*

^g Deut. 28:1-68; 29:1; 30:15-20; 31:29; Joshua 23:15-16; 2 Kings 21:12-15; 2 Chron. 34:24-25; 36:16-17; Jeremiah 3:8; Heb. 8:9

^h Deut. 6:25; Lev. 18:5; Ez. 20:11; Luke 10:26-28; Rom. 2:13; 3:20; 4:13-16; 7:10; 10:5; Phil. 3:9; Galatians 2:16; 3:10, 12; 3:21(!)-22

ⁱ 2 Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 3:1-9; 3:15-4:7; Romans 3:31-4:17; John 8:56; Acts 24:14; 28:23

^j Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; 5:20-21; 7:4-25; 1 Corinthians 15:56; 2 Corinthians 3:7-9; Galatians 3:10; 3:19-21; 4:24

^k 1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:5-6; Hebrews 7:18-19; 10:1; Colossians 2:16-17; Matthew 11:13; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 24:14; 28:23

^l Hebrews 8:4-13; 10:1; Colossians 2:16-17; Luke 24:27, 44; 16:16; 23:45; John 1:17; Heb. 8:13; 7:18-19; Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38

^m Luke 24:44; 2 Cor. 3:14; Heb. 8:6; Gal. 3:15-4:7; Gen. 6:18; 9:9-17; 15:18; 17:2-21; 21:27-32; Ex. 2:24; 6:4-5; 19:5; Deut. 5:3. etc.!

ⁿ 1 Timothy 1:6-11; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11

The New Covenant

We believe and teach the New Covenant is an everlasting covenant that was established through the person and redemptive work of Christ.^a All members of the New Covenant (those people who have been bought by His blood and who have been brought to taste of the blessings of eternal life through the working of the Holy Spirit) have been given new hearts; have been made to fear and love the Lord; and have become members of this covenant by the instrumental means of faith in Jesus Christ.^b The New Covenant is written by the Spirit on the hearts of men.^c It is a ministry of the Spirit and of life, providing forgiveness, righteousness, blessing, life, and intimate knowledge of God to all its members.^d It is the fulfilling, climactic covenant of which all of God's previous covenants with men were promissory and preparatory.^e The New Testament Scriptures contain God's final words of revelation, given through Jesus Christ and His New Testament apostles and prophets.^f The New Testament is the authority concerning Christian conduct,^g and the interpretive lens through which the Old Testament must be understood and applied.^h

^a Isaiah 42:6; 49:8; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 5:7; Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; 9:11-26; 13:20-21

^b Ezekiel 36:22-29ff; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:15-18; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Corinthians 5:14

^c 2 Corinthians 3:1-3; Jeremiah 31:31-34

^d Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Corinthians 1:30

^e Matthew 5:17-20; Romans 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3:2-11; Galatians 2:19 (cf. 3:15-4:7); 3:24-25; 4:21-5:1; Ephesians 2:14-16

^f John 1:17-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:4-5; (cf. John 16:12-15)

^g Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22; 7:37; Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 28:20; John 13:34-35; 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 John 3:23; Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 3:15-17; Hebrews 7:12; Titus 2:11-14; Matthew 17:2-8 (cf. Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36)

^h 2 Corinthians 3:14-18; 3:5-13; Colossians 2:16-17 (cf. 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3); John 3:39, 46; 1 Peter 1:12; Romans 3:31-4:25