



gospellifetchurch

PASTORAL TEAM AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

PURPOSE OF THIS AFFIRMATION

We believe the Lord charges the eldership of local churches to consistently teach the whole counsel of God. We also believe that doctrinal unity within the church is essential for church health and vitality. In light of these convictions, this document in some detail outlines our beliefs on the central doctrines of the Christian faith and will serve as the official doctrinal position of our pastoral team. All men joining the eldership will be united under this affirmation and held accountable to maintain it through their teaching and life. It is our hope that this affirmation of faith will not only protect the doctrinal integrity of our church but also be a confessional basis of unity among our pastoral leadership. (Acts 20:27-32; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-8, 4:1-4, 16; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 5:1-4)

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

THE WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (Mark 13:31; John 8:31-32, 20:31; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21)

We are committed to a literal, grammatical, historical reading of Scripture. This does not mean that figurative language, metaphors or typology are ignored, but rather that the Bible is to be read in light of both the human and divine authors' intent. We further believe that although there is both continuity and discontinuity between Israel and the church that there is only one people of God and one means of salvation (namely faith in Christ). We believe that the theme of the whole of Scripture is Christocentric and that the Old Testament should be read in light of the full revelation of the New Testament. (Matt. 5:17-20, 22:36-40; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 9:28-35, 24:25-27; Rom. 6:14, 9:6-8; 1 Co 9:20-22; 2 Co 1:20; Gal. 3:7-9, 3:23-29, 6:14-16, Eph. 3:5-6; Col 2:16-17; Heb. 7:18-19, 8:6-13, 10:1)

We are also committed to the centrality preaching of God's Word. We believe that Christ intends to build his church through the faithful, public proclamation of his word.

Though at times other means of preaching are beneficial and will be utilized, we affirm that the regular exposition of Scripture is the most conducive method of preaching for building of a healthy local church. (Neh. 8:8; Acts 6:2; 1 Cor. 2:17-24; 2 Tim 4:1-3)

THE TRINITY

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three Persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. (Gen. 1:1, 26; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3, 4:24; Rom. 1:19-20; Eph. 4:5-6)

We believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have eternally enjoyed perfect unity, sufficiency and joy as they have beheld their own perfections. (John 12:26, 15:11; Matt. 12:18)

GOD THE FATHER

We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He infallibly foreknows all that shall come to pass, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (Matt. 23:9; Luke 10:21,-22; John 3:16; 6:27; Rom. 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:1-2; 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 1:6)

We affirm that God is sovereign over all his creation. He has the absolute right to govern the entire universe and to do everything that pleases him. God's sovereignty is universal, absolute and irresistible; therefore nothing in all creation, even Satan himself, can ultimately thwart his sovereign purposes. (Isa. 46:11; Psa. 115:3; Prov. 16:4; 2 Chron. 20:6; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; Phil. 2:13)

We believe that God is infinite in knowledge. He knows all things both actual and potential, past, present and future, comprehensively and instantaneously. God does not learn, forget, speculate or come to conclusions in an absolute sense. From God's perspective what has yet to happen is as settled as what has happened, for he knows both exhaustively. (2 Kings 13:19; Job 37:16; Psa. 139:1-4, 15-18, 147:4-5; Isa. 40:13-14; Matt. 10:29-30, 11:21; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20)

JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's one and only Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. (Matt. 1:18-25, 20:28; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1, 20:30-31; Acts 1:11; Rom. 5:6-8; 6:9-10, 8:46, 9:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; Heb. 7:25, 9:28)

We believe that in the incarnation the eternal Son of God took on a fully human nature, so that two distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person. Thus the

Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God and truly man, and therefore is the only and perfect Mediator between God and man. (John 1:14; Rom. 1:3-4; Gal. 4:4-5; Phil. 2:6-8; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:17)

We believe that in his death Christ atoned for the sins of his people. On the cross Christ satisfied the demands of God's just wrath serving as the righteous substitute for sinners. We believe that in his atonement Christ actually paid for the sins of all those who would trust in him. Although the atonement is of infinite worth, it is efficient only for the elect, actually securing for them salvation and all its benefits. (Matt. 1:21; John 10:11, 15; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25-26, 8:31-39; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:24, 3:18; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:2)

We believe that after Christ's death on the third day he rose physically from the grave. Through his resurrection Christ vindicated the saving work of His life and death and guaranteed the future resurrection of all those who are united with him through faith. After he rose from dead, he was seen by many eyewitnesses for forty days and then ascended bodily into heaven. Now Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet. He will one day return in great power and glory to gather his elect and fully establish his kingdom. (Matt. 24:31, 28:6; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 21:27, 22:69; John 19:40-41; Acts 1:3-11, 2:33, 5:31, 17:31; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:1-4, 25; Phil. 2:9-11; Col.3:1; Heb.1:13)

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. (John 14:16-26, 15:26-27, 16:9-14; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Gal. 5:22-26)

We believe that every believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion. Spirit-baptism unites believers together in the body of Christ and permanently seals believers with the indwelling Spirit. Although Spirit-baptism is instantaneous and unrepeatable, believers should seek on-going experiences of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion for greater empowerment and sanctification. We believe that these post-conversion experiences are best understood through the biblical metaphor of Spirit-filling. (John 14:16-17; Acts 10:44-48; 1 Cor. 3:16, 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:18; Col. 3:16)

We affirm that the spiritual gifts delineated in the New Testament are God's means of building his church today, and therefore, ought to be pursued and practiced. We believe that these gifts never trump the authority of the word of God, but are always to be exercised in submission to it. Because of God's design for spiritual gifts every Christian should out of love for the church earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit so that the body might be built up. (Act 2:17; 1 Cor. 1:7, 12:7, 31, 13:1-13, 14:1, 29-39; Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Thess. 5:19-21)

MAN & SIN

We believe that although mankind was created morally upright in the image of the Creator he fell from that state of innocence and communion with God by listening to the serpent's deceit and disobeying the Lord's command. (Gen. 3:1-13; Eccles. 7:9; 2 Cor. 11:3)

We believe that Adam acted as mankind's representative; therefore, when he fell all the guilt, penalty and condemnation for his sin rightly belonged to each of his descendants. Because of this union with Adam, all human beings are born with a corrupt disposition and are both unable and unwilling to submit to God's righteous demands. Apart from divine intervention, human beings enslaved by sin will face the righteous wrath of God. (Rom. 5:12, 6:14, 20, 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14, 15:21; Eph. 2:1-3)

We affirm that because of sin God has subjected the whole of creation to futility. This means that in this present age all Adam's descendants will experience suffering and decay. This physical hardship is designed by God to show us the severity of sin and produce in mankind a gratitude for his mercy in withholding his impending, righteous judgment upon the world. (Rom. 2:4, 8:20, 23, 34-35, 9:22-23; 2 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:13)

We believe that man and woman are of equal worth and dignity before the Lord, since both are created equally in the image of God. Yet God has given man and woman differing roles. This is particularly true in marriage. We believe that marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment before the Lord. Through the gift of marriage God has revealed the union between Christ and His church and provided the appropriate channel for sexual intimacy and the procreation of the human race. We believe the biblical role for the husband is loving, humble headship. This means that the husband has a God-given responsibility to love his wife as Christ loved the church, to provide physically and spiritually for his wife and to protect his wife from threats to her security. We believe that the biblical role for the wife is joyful, intelligent submission. This means that the wife has a God-given responsibility to submit herself to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ, to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. (Gen. 1:26-28; Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:6-12; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

We believe that children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents. (Deut. 6:4-9; Psa. 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 139:13-14; Prov. 6:2-22; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21)

SALVATION

We believe that God, before the foundation of the world, chose all those who would be saved. This divine choice was not based on any foreseen merit within the individual, but rather solely according to God's good pleasure. (Gen. 12:2, 18:19; Ex. 33:17; Psa. 65:4; John 6:37, 17:2, 6, 9, 15:16; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29-30, 33; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We believe that all mankind because of Adam's sin is born spiritually dead. This sinful condition separates them from God and leads to eternal death. The only way man can be rescued from this sinful condition is by the regenerating grace of God. We believe that all whom God elects will surely be made spiritually alive, receive the effectual call of the Holy Spirit and respond in faith and repentance to the preaching of the gospel. (Gen. 1:26, 2:17, 3:19, 5:2; Psa. 51:7; Prov. 28:13; Eccl. 2:11; Jer. 17:9; John 1:13, 3:14, 16, 5:24, 30, 7:13, 8:12, 10:26; Rom. 3:19, 5:19, 8:1, 9:22; 2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:9; Jas. 1:14; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 19:3, 20; 20:10, 14,15; 21:18)

We believe that justification is a judicial act of God by which He pardons the sinner and declares him righteous in His sight. Justification is not based on man's character, good works or religious merit, but rather, it is based solely on the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. We further affirm that faith is the means by which the perfect righteousness of Christ is credited to the sinners account and that this faith is a gracious gift of God. The evidence of saving faith is a transformed life marked by the presence of the Spirit's fruit. (Psa. 130:3, 143:2; Eccl. 7:20; Matt. 8:13; 9:28; 13:23; John 5:9-13, 15:5, 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 3:20-26, 4:5, 9-11, 21, 5:18-19, 10:8, 17; 1 Cor. 1:30, 15:3-4; Gal. 3:11-12, 5:16-26; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 11:1; Jas. 2:17, 19; 1 John 2:3, 3:24)

We believe that all whom God grants his justifying grace will also receive his sanctifying grace. Sanctification is the process in which God enables the sinner to deny the sinful flesh and walk in holiness. Sanctification occurs as the believer increasingly lives in obedience to God's Word through the enabling work of the Holy Spirit. Although God empowers sanctification, the Bible consistently calls believers to actively obey the commands of Scripture and actively fight against sin in their lives. (Matt. 5:48; John 10:36, 17:17; 17:19; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16; Gal. 2:20, 4:19, 5:25; Eph. 4:13, 15, 22-24; Phil. 1:6, 2:12-13, 3:13-14; Col. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:14-15, 3:15; 2 Pet. 3:18)

We believe that all who have been justified will persevere in the faith. This is not to say that a true believer will live perfectly, but rather all who have trusted in Christ will inevitably walk in newness of life. Since salvation is ultimately a gift from God none of God's children will be finally lost. He will enable all who have been saved through the death of His Son to endure to the end. Although perseverance is purchased by for all believers by Christ's death it does not diminish in any way the Christian's responsibility to hold fast to the gospel and fight against sin. (Mark 13:13; John 8:31, 10:26-30; Rom. 8:13, 28-30; 1 Cor. 1:8-9, 15:1-2; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 1:4-5; Phil. 1:6, 3:12-13; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Tim. 2:11-12, 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:10; Heb. 12:14; 1 John 2:3-6, 3:4-10, 4:20; Jude 24-25)

We believe that God will complete the work which he began in all His elect and that when Christ returns all believers will be glorified. At Jesus' coming the saints of all time will receive their resurrected bodies and be transformed into the very image of Christ himself. Glorification like justification is a blood-bought gift of grace achieved through the work of Jesus alone. (Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:17-23, 8:29-30; 1 Cor. 15:49, 53; 2 Cor. 5:1-5; Eph. 5:25-27; Phil. 1:6, 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Heb. 11:39; 1 John 3:2-4)

THE CHURCH

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the Head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a group of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and united in the gospel for worship, edification and evangelism. (Eph. 2:19-22; Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:19-21; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23-25)

We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the church through which those who have responded in faith and repentance to the gospel visibly express their union with Christ's death and resurrection by being immersed in water. Baptism also symbolizes identification with the true people of God, purification from sin and death to the old way of life. Therefore in obedience to the Lord and as a testimony to the watching world all believers should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:26-27; Acts 2:38, 8:36-39, 18:8, 1 Cor. 12:13; John 3:23; Rom. 2:28-29, 4:16; Gal. 3:7; Mark 1:4-5; Matt 28:19; Heb. 10:22)

We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church in which believers eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Christ's broken body and shed blood. The New Covenant people of God who by faith partake of the Lord's Table are spiritually nourished through the remembrance of all that Christ has accomplished on their behalf. Therefore, all who participate in the Lord's Table in a worthy manner experience spiritual health and growth through it. (1 Cor. 11:17-32; 10:16-17; John 6:53-63; Rom 2:28-29, 4:16; Gal 3:7)

We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm spiritually qualified, gifted men to serve as pastors (elders). These men are called by God to provide leadership to the church and to devote themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer. Although we believe that women have a vital role to play within the church, we believe that the office of pastor (elder) is reserved exclusively for men. (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 13:17; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 2:12)

We believe that local church should also recognize qualified men to serve as deacons. The diaconate functions to promote unity within the church by supporting the ministry of the word and prayer of the pastoral team through acts of servant leadership. (Acts 6:1-6; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-18)

We believe that God calls every member of the congregation to take an active role in the life of the local church. Each church member is responsible before God to exercise

his gifts for the good of the body, actively make disciples, promote unity with the church, support the testimony of the church, submit to church leadership, faithfully attend worship and participate in the process of church discipline. (Matt. 18:15-17, 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 14:12; Eph. 4:1-3; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 3:8, 4:10; Heb. 10:24-25, 13:17)

THE LAST THINGS

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal pleasure of the righteous and the endless suffering of the wicked. (Matt. 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Cor. 15; 2Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:4-6,11-15)

We believe that when believers die they are immediately received into God's presence. When Christ returns those who have trusted in Christ will receive their resurrected bodies and remain in the Master's joy for all eternity. We believe that when unbelievers die they endure conscious torment in a literal hell. All those that in this life do not submit to the Lordship of Christ will be finally eternally judged in the lake of fire. (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:1-9; Rev. 6:9-11, 20:14; Luke 16:19-31, 20:43)

We believe that the God in his own good time will bring the present world to an end. We believe that although the kingdom of Christ was inaugurated at the Incarnation it will reach its culmination when Christ physically returns to earth. At this point Christ will fully take his place as ruler of the world and God will for all eternity pour out his love and mercy for the everlasting joy of his people. (Isa. 2:4, 11:9; Matt. 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5 15:24-58; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 1:5, 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:14-18, 5:1-2.; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:27-28; Rev. 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13)

THE SPIRIT OF THIS AFFIRMATION

We do not believe that all things in this affirmation are of equal importance. We recognize that some matters discussed are more essential and some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved or in order to be a godly Christian.

We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served by clearly defining doctrine. Although this statement is by no means exhaustive, it does seek to address many key theological issues. We believe a robust confessional statement such as this ultimately serves the health of the church by both upholding the value of truth and calling Christians to love another in spite of differences on secondary matters. The elevation of both truth and love demonstrates the power of true Christian unity and ultimately honors Christ. (Acts 17:11; 20:27; Tit. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:5; 6:3-5; Ephesians 4:4-6, 14-16; John 13:34-35; 2 Pet. 3:18).

We do not claim that this affirmation is infallible, and we are open to the Lord refining and

correcting any inaccuracies in this statement through his Word. However we do hold humbly and firmly hold to these truths because at present we believe that they are consistent with Scripture. We welcome honest and humble suggestions about this document, and pray that as conversation takes place, all parties involved will grow in their love for the truth and fellowship with one another.