

ARTICLE III

Statement of Faith and Doctrine

Section 1. The Word of God

We believe and teach that the sole and final authority for the church is the Bible, which includes all sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments (Romans 15:4; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 3:15-16).

We believe and teach that every word of the original autographs is God-breathed. Therefore the Scriptures are verbally inspired, inerrant, infallible, and totally sufficient and trustworthy for doctrine and instruction (Isaiah 1:10; 34:15-16; 40:6-8; 55:10-11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We believe and teach that Scriptures are sufficient, and, with the guiding efforts of the Holy Spirit, are entirely adequate for every spiritual or emotional need, and are infinitely superior to all human understanding and wisdom (Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:11,105; Isaiah 55:8-9; Matthew 4:4; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:3-4).

We believe and teach the clarity of Scripture, and its relevance to the world today. It is consistent within itself and is properly interpreted in the literal-grammatical historical sense. Scripture is the completed revelation of God, and nothing shall be added to it or taken from it (Deuteronomy 4:2; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 23:28-29; John 10:35; Ephesians 3:4-5; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18-19).

Section 2. The Triune God of the Word

We believe and teach that there is one God, infinite and self-existent, who exists eternally as three distinct, yet inseparable persons known as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These three are one in their unchangeable nature, essence and attributes (Deuteronomy 6:4; Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 45:4-7; Matthew 28:19 Mark 12:29; John 1:1; John 4:24; John 10:30, John 14:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Hebrews 1:3-4, 8-10).

We believe and teach that each of the members of the Godhead has a distinct function in the eternal purpose of the Godhead while at the same time possessing full deity. Each is equally worthy of worship and obedience, and each is glorified by the work of redemption (Isaiah 48:16; John 17:1-5; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 1:6).

Section 3. God the Father

We believe and teach that God the Father is the first person in the Trinity. He is infinite, self-existent spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. He is creator of all things, and the only absolute, omnipotent ruler in the universe. He is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption (Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 103:19; 145:8-9; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9).

We believe and teach that God's fatherhood involves both a designation within the Trinity and His relationship with humankind. As Creator he is Father to all people, but He is the spiritual Father only to those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ. He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own. He saves from sin all who come to Him through Christ

alone, securing their adoption as His children and making them fellow heirs with Christ (John 1:12; 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 13:48; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:5-6; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 12:5-9; 1 Peter 1:3).

We believe and teach that God has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass, knowing infinitely all things, from beginning to end. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor approver of sin, but perfectly judges each person according to his/her own work, thus making people responsible for their own sins (1 Chronicles 29:11; Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47; Acts 2:23; Romans 9:19-21; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 1:17; James 1:13; 1 Peter 1:17).

Section 4. God the Son

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Godhead, fully God, eternally of the same essence of Being as the Father, sharing the same attributes, and equal in divine nature (John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9; Hebrews 1:3-4).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ voluntarily left His place in heaven to be born of a virgin, through the miracle of divine conception by the Holy Spirit. He emptied Himself, not of His Divine essence, nor by the surrender of His full Deity, but rather veiling His glory while at the same time taking on a human nature and becoming fully man. As the unique God-man, he is the perfect Revealer of God, the Savior of humankind, Mediator between God and people, Judge of all (John 1:14, 18; 5:27; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:9-18; 10:5-10; 1 Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:13).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ led a sinless life, tempted in all ways as we are tempted, but died a propitiatory and substitutionary death, bearing the full penalty of God's wrath and furnishing the grounds for forgiveness of believing sinners. His death is both sufficient for all, yet efficient only for the elect (John 10:15; Romans 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:17; 7:26; 4:15; 1 Peter 3:18; Revelation 5:9).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day and is now seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, holding the position of Prophet, Priest and King. He is the head of the Church, the great Shepherd. Today He is building His church, the bride of Christ, and continually ministering to her as the heavenly Advocate and interceding for the saints (John 10:27-28; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 8:1; 13:20; 1 Peter 1:21; 2:2; 1 John 2:1).

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ will one day visibly and physically return for His bride in power and authority. He will judge all people in righteousness, bringing both retribution to unrepentant sinners and reward to those who follow Him (Matthew 24:30; John 5:27; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 2:27; 20:11-15).

Section 5. God the Holy Spirit

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead, co-equal and co-substantial with the Father and the Son, possessing all the same attributes of personality and deity, including intellect, emotion, will, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and

truthfulness (Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:13-14; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 28:19; John 16:13; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; Romans 15:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 12:4-6, 11; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 9:14; 10:15-17).

We believe and teach that that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the Divine will in relationship to all humankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation, the incarnation, the written revelation and the work of salvation. In the Old Testament He did not permanently indwell people, but came upon certain saints for unique times and purposes. He became resident in the world on the day of Pentecost, having been sent by the Father and the Son to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ, which is Christ's church. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and transforms believers into the image of Christ (Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:18; John 3:5-8; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:13; 2:20; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Teacher who moved the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. The Holy Spirit empowers the preaching and the understanding of the Word of God (John 16:13-15; 2 Corinthians 2; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, enabling believers to exercise the gift of saving faith and to receive Jesus as both Savior and Lord, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ. He gives spiritual gifts to Christians as He wills, indwells believers at the moment of salvation, and seals them until the day of redemption, while leading, sanctifying, instructing, comforting and empowering them for service (Romans 6:3-4; 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13; Titus 3:5-6).

We believe and teach that all believers are commanded to be filled (controlled) by the Holy Spirit, and that all believers are gifted by the Spirit for the intense purpose of glorifying Jesus Christ. Tongues, signs and prophecies were given only at the beginning of the church to authenticate the apostles as the revealers of Divine truth and ceased upon the completion of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 2:1-4; 1 John 2:20-27).

Section 6. Creation and the Sovereignty of God

We believe and teach that out of nothing God spoke into creation the physical universe and all that it contains, including angelic beings, in six literal days. He is before all things and sustains for His own purposes all things, upholding them by the word of His power. God's creation was very good and is a reflection of His glory and reveals His truth (Genesis 1; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 19:1-6; 103:19; Romans 1:18-20; 11:36; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3; 11:3).

We believe and teach the sovereignty of God and His absolute providence over the affairs of humankind and creation before time and throughout history. God ordains all life and numbers its days. He determines the time and manner of death, the salvation of sinners, and all world events, from the least to the greatest. God directs both the helpful and harmful acts of people. Nonetheless, humans as created, moral beings remains responsible for their own thoughts and actions (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20; Job 14:5; Psalm 103:19; 135:6; 139:16; Proverbs 16:33; Isaiah

14:26-27; 45:6-7; Daniel 2:20-21; 4:34-35; Matthew 10:29-30; John 21:18-19; Acts 2:22-23; 4:10, 27-28; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:4, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; James 4:13-15; Revelation 13:8).

Section 7. Angels

We believe and teach that angels are spirit beings created to serve and worship God and therefore are not to be worshipped. Angels were the first of God's creation, witnesses to the creation of the earth and humankind. Although angels currently are more powerful than humans, someday redeemed people will judge them (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 38:6-7; Psalm 103:20-21; Matthew 4:10; 28:2; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 5:21; Hebrews 1:5-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

We believe and teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking a third of the angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15; Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; 1 Timothy 2:14; Revelation 12:4).

We believe and teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and people; that he is the prince of this world, roaming the earth and seeking those whom he would devour. As believers in Christ, we are protected by God and instructed not to engage or charge after Satan, but rather to resist him through the provisions supplied by God (Job 1:6-10; 12; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-18; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Revelation 12:10).

Satan has been defeated through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his ultimate end is guaranteed by Christ's finished work. Satan, along with all who rebel against God and reject His plan of salvation, shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Romans 16:20; Colossians 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 12:11; 20:10).

Section 8. Humanity and Sin

We believe and teach that God created people in His image and likeness, apart from any evolutionary process. Each person is a product of God's handiwork, uniquely resembling God in certain characteristics and capacities necessary for relationships and in exercising dominion over God's creation. As such God values all human life, starting from conception (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 9:6; Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13-17).

We believe and teach that God created Adam & Eve free of sin, with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God. God's intention in creating humans was that they should glorify Him and enjoy His fellowship, live their lives in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for humanity in the world (Genesis 2; Isaiah 43:7; Romans 5:13; 8:29; Colossians 1:16; James 3:9; Revelation 4:11).

We believe and teach that God created both male and female, equally bearing the image of God yet different in functional distinctions and subordinations, each bringing Him glory through their unique roles. God outlines these differences in the Bible; they are not based on cultural bias or human philosophy (Genesis 1:27; 2:18-24; 1 Corinthians 11:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

We believe and teach that Adam was a real man and historical figure, whose one act of disobedience to the revealed Word of God resulted in the imputation of sin to the entire human race. Through Adam, the forebear and representative of all humankind, people lost their innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Humanity's depravity is total, extending even to the will as free moral agents, leaving them in bondage to sin and causing them to always choose darkness and resulting in their inability to choose Christ. With no recuperative powers to enable them to recover themselves, each person is hopelessly lost (Genesis 3; 6:5; 1 Kings 8:46; Psalms 14:1-3; 51:5; 58:3; Ecclesiastes 9:3; 7:29; Isaiah 1:2-6; 6:5; 64:5-7; Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9; Mark 7:14-23; John 3:19-20, 36; 5:40; 6:44, 65; 8:44; Romans 1:18-3:20; 12-19; 8:6-8; 1 Corinthians 2;14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We believe and teach that because in Adam every person of all ages possesses a sin nature (Jesus Christ being the only exception), each person's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:5, 16; Romans 3:24-26; 5:6-8; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 2:9).

Section 9. Salvation

We believe and teach that all people are sinners by nature and by choice, and are therefore under condemnation. The good news is that there is a Savior! Thus, we teach that salvation is by the grace of God, which is neither merited nor secured, in part or in whole, by any person's virtue or work. The sole ground of salvation is the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This great truth, however, never nullifies or diminishes the sinner's accountability, nor does it relieve believers from communicating the gospel as commanded by Christ (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:10-18, 23; 10:8-15; Ephesians 2:8-9).

We believe and teach that God's sovereign plan of salvation was divinely drafted in eternity past, and was fulfilled through the finished work of Christ alone and applied by the Holy Spirit. By God's design, grace always has, and always will, stand behind all stages of salvation. Thus, our salvation is entirely accomplished by the almighty power of the sovereign and gracious triune God (Romans 3:24-25; 11:6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7; Hebrews 9:26; 10:10-14; Revelation 13:8). Vital components of God's salvation include:

Election

We believe and teach that election is the gracious act of God conceived before the foundation of the world. In love, He chose in Christ those whom he graciously calls, regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:2-3).

We believe and teach that God's sovereign election does not contradict, nor negate, the responsibility of each person to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; James 4:8; Revelation 22:17).

We believe and teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is unconditional and not related to any initiative of their own part, nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will. Rather, God's favor is solely because of His love, His sovereign grace, and His mercy (John 1:12-13; Romans 9:14-16; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

Justification

We believe and teach that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and for His glory alone. Justification is the judicial act of God, whereby He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins and confess Him as sovereign Lord. It is a final act, so that the believer is forever and completely justified from the moment of saving faith. Therefore, the believer awaits no final last day declaration of justification. Justification is not based upon the believer's own righteousness, but on a righteousness alien to him. This righteousness is apart from any person's virtue or and involves the imputation of our sins on Christ, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. By this means, God shows Himself to be "just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Isaiah 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 3:20-26; 4:3-6, 9-11; 5:1, 9; 8:33; 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 5:21; Philippians 2:11; 3:9; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24).

Regeneration

We believe and teach that regeneration, which is our new birth in Christ, is a gracious supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given. It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the means of the Word of God. This new birth results in the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Thus the believer receives the spiritual graces of the New Covenant, which include saving faith, reconciliation and peace with God, a new heart, new affections, and deliverance from the dominating power of sin (Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:19-20; John 3:3-7; 5:24; Romans 2:28-29; 5:1; 6:1-14; 2 Corinthians 2: 4-5; Colossians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5).

Sanctification

We believe and teach that every believer is sanctified—that is, set apart unto God—and declared to be holy, and identified as a saint. Furthermore, sanctification is both initial and progressive in the life of the believer. We believe that sanctification is universal, mandatory evidence of a justification that is already final and complete, and not in any sense a means of attaining justification (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-15).

We believe and teach that initial sanctification is positional, permanent, and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or experiential condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:11; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We believe and teach that progressive sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer is brought into an ever-increasing holiness in the conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. This sanctification is an effect of the love of God manifested in the soul, whereby through the gracious empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer

is enabled to live a life that is increasingly pleasing to the Lord (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 8:28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 1:6-11; Colossians 1:5-6, 9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 5:23; 2 Peter 3:18).

We believe and teach that every saved person, although a new creation in Christ and for whom the penalty of sin has been paid in full, is involved in a daily, lifelong conflict against the flesh. While eradication of sin is not possible in this life, the Holy Spirit empowers both for victory over sin and impact and fruitfulness in ministry. Furthermore, progressive sanctification in the individual believer is aided by the local church through preaching, teaching, discipline, fellowship, and accountability to the body of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 12:12, 20-21; Romans 7:15-25; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:11-16; 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Perseverance

We believe and teach the biblical doctrine of the perseverance, and thus the security, of the saints. It has two parts: 1) No true child of God, born of the Holy Spirit, will ever be lost because he is kept by the power of God; and, 2) It is equally true, however, that no person is saved without persevering to the end. Such perseverance may be marked by periods of discouragement, doubt, and even disobedience, but those genuinely saved will persevere to the end in faith and obedience. The means God uses to bring about our perseverance are His magnificent promises and His terrifying warnings. Those who profess a beginning in the Christian faith, but do not continue, give evidence that they were never granted saving faith (Mark 13:13; John 10:28-30; Romans 8:29-30; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:5-6; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 3:6,14; 10:26-31; 12:14; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 2:19; 3:9-10; Jude 1-25).

Section 10. The Church

We believe and teach that in the current era, commencing at Pentecost, Christ is building His Church. All who confess faith in Jesus Christ alone are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into this one united spiritual body. The Church, of which Christ is the Head, is variously depicted as His Body, His Bride, a building, spiritual house or sanctuary, the flock of the Shepherd, and the branches of which He is the life source. The Church exists both universally (i.e., the total number of genuine disciples throughout Church history) and locally (i.e., historically in localized assemblies). The primary overarching purpose of the Church, whether viewed from the local perspective or the universal, is to glorify God our Savior (Matthew 16:18; John 10:11; 15:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:9, 16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 11:2; Ephesians 1:22; 2:20-22; 5:22-32; Colossians 1:18; 2:7; 1 Peter 2:5, 25).

We believe and teach that Christ builds His church by calling out His elect from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue. The Holy Spirit forms and constitutes the church by baptizing true believers into one universal, spiritual body, which is manifested in local churches. Although salvation is bestowed and appropriated individually, Scripture focuses on the corporate Body within which the individual is to be a complementary, contributing member. Christ establishes and oversees this unity and diversity in order that the local church might become the main context for worship and service and a springboard for evangelism (Romans 1:5; 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-27; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:21; 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:11; Revelation 5:9).

The local church has been commissioned to preach the Word faithfully, preserve the unity of the church through discipline, and practice the ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 18:15-18; 28:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:11-15; 11:23-26; 2 Timothy 4:2).

We believe and teach that the Scriptures establish two categories of office within the Church: Elders (also designated overseers or bishops, and pastor/teachers), and Deacons to lead and serve the flock under Christ. Those who serve in these capacities must be qualified biblically. The elders-overseers-pastor/teachers who have been given a divinely delegated authority are especially accountable for the spiritual welfare of their Master's flock. He will judge not only them and their guidance of His sheep but also the flock's expected submission to their spiritual direction (Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We believe and teach that local church is independent or autonomous in status, although there should be occasions of interdependence among local assemblies of the same mindset and loyalty to the Lord and His Word (Acts 15:19-31; Romans 15:26-27).

Section 11. Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe and teach the biblical distinction between the gospel and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances are symbols that represent and picture the benefits and blessings of the New Covenant. They are not the gospel, and therefore are not to be given the primacy and centrality the gospel alone is to receive.

We believe and teach that the Lord Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances are to be observed and administered until His return (Matthew 28:19-20; I Corinthians 11:26). And, while commanded by the Lord, neither imparts salvation, which is based solely on faith in the redeeming work of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We believe and teach that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit as a public profession of faith and identification with Christ (Matthew 3:13-17; 28:18-20; Mark 9:11; Luke 4:21-22; Acts 2:41; 8:38-39). Baptism is a visual depiction of the immersion in Christ which took place at the moment of the believer's salvation (Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-28; Colossians 2:12).

We believe and teach that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32). Participation in the Lord's Supper is a Spirit-led memorial that drives us to worship (John 14:26; 15:26-27). As such, believers are exhorted to be reconciled to God and each other so that they do not participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Section 12. Christian Life

We believe and teach that believers are called to a manner of life worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).

We believe and teach that the conduct of a true believer is marked by righteousness, good works (Ephesians 2:10) and separation unto God from the evil ways of the world (Romans 12:12),

manifested by speaking the truth (James 5:12), maintaining the sanctity of the home (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), settling differences between Christians in accordance with the Word of God (1 Corinthians 6:18), not engaging in carnal strife but showing a Christ-like attitude toward all people (Romans 12:17-21), exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), and maintaining a life of prayer (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6), including the privilege, when sick, of calling for the Elders of the church to pray and to anoint with oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:13-18).

We believe and teach that civil government is ordained of God for the punishment of those who do evil and for the promotion and protection of that which is good. It is therefore the duty of believers to pray for those in authority and to be submissive and obedient to their authority, except in matters directly contrary to the Word of God (Acts 4:18-19; Acts 5:27-29; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

We believe and teach that though saved, believers still commit sin (1 Kings 8:46; 1 John 1:8). True believers are quick to confess and repent of sin (1 John 1:9). Christians are driven by the Holy Spirit to pursue spiritual growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Section 13. Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe and teach that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female (Genesis 2:18-22). These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe and teach that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe and teach that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We believe and teach that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Riverbend Community Church as a local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the members of Riverbend Community Church and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Riverbend Community Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

We believe and teach that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ alone (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe and teach that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Riverbend Community Church.

Section 14. Last Things (Eschatology)

Regarding Eschatology, we apply the dictum, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." We believe that the doctrines regarding personal eschatology, the coming of Christ, and the eternal state are clearly expressed in the Scriptures and are therefore essential. Yet, we hold that the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and the nature of the millennium are less clear and therefore are non-essentials. Therefore, various corporate eschatological views are free to be discussed and taught side-by-side as long as unity is maintained and love is preeminent.

We believe and teach that the study of eschatology is primarily about Jesus Christ. It is to have an ethical effect on the people of God (1 John 2:28-3:3; 2 Peter 3:10-14). This effect is manifested in a heart that longs for the appearance of our blessed hope (Titus 2:13), a spirit that seeks to encourage the brethren with these truths (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), and holy lives that reflect the values of the knowledge that this present world is passing away and will give way to eternity (2 Peter 3:11-14). Although it is difficult to organize and interrelate the biblical references to many eschatological events (i.e., resurrections and the various judgments etc.), there are several overarching facts which are transparently clear and agreed upon by most evangelicals.

We believe and teach that personal conscious being is not interrupted by physical death (Luke 16:19-31). The believer's soul/spirit is ushered immediately into the presence of Christ at physical death (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). The souls/spirits of the unregenerate at physical death also continue, but in conscious torment until the Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:13-15). All people will experience a bodily resurrection, the saved to eternal life and overwhelming joy, and the unsaved to eternal separation and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:19-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-11).

We believe and teach that the Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Acts 1:11). His second coming is presented in the New Testament as being near or imminent, although its timing is unknown to people (Mark 13:33-37; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11). The two elements of His final coming, often described using the terms "Rapture" and Revelation," are most often mentioned side-by-side without clear distinctions in New Testament contexts (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1,8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13). Furthermore, as clear as the fact of the Rapture is, its timing in relationship to the tribulation remains open to at least four theological interpretations (i.e., pre-, mid-, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation), each exhibiting some strengths and some weaknesses.

Within the broader spectrum of orthodox teaching on last things, we believe and teach that although significant spiritual dimensions of the Kingdom have been inaugurated in conjunction with the first coming of Christ (Colossians 1:13), the King will return again to fulfill God's many promises regarding the nation of Israel. Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His Messianic kingdom for a

thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). The kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17).

After the closing of the millennium, (Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21, 22). Following this, the saints will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21, 22).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).