

ARTICLE EIGHT

ARTICLES OF FAITH

The activities and practices of the Church shall be at all times, consistent with the following:

In the name of the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - we declare and confess before all people the following Articles of Faith:

SECTION 1. THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe that there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body and parts, infinite and unchangeable in power, wisdom, holiness and love. He is the Creator, Sovereign Ruler and Preserver of all things whether visible or invisible. In the divine unity of his Godhead there exists three Persons, of one substance and being, power and perfection: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is personal, self-existent and unchangeable and He alone possesses omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

SECTION 2. CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

We believe that this Triune God created the heavens and the earth, all that is in them, whether visible or invisible, and that He alone sustains, protects and governs his creation with gracious regard for the welfare of mankind, to the glory of His name.

SECTION 3. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father, the second person of the Triune Godhead, the eternally begotten Son, of one substance with the Father and by the conception of the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary so that two whole perfect natures, that is to say his Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man. He was sinless in his life, truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile us to his Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men and women. This same Jesus arose bodily from the dead on the third day. He ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father, the Majesty on high. He is now enthroned to intercede for us. He will return from heaven in a second personal advent. He will be the judge of all men and women. He will reign in righteousness and will consummate his redemptive mission. This blessed hope of the Christian inspires us to holy living, to missionary witness and to sacrificial service.

SECTION 4. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune Godhead. He is of one substance with the Father and the Son, from whom He has proceeded and is coequal with them in being, power and eternity. It is his ministry to glorify Jesus Christ and He is ever present and active in the Church of Christ. He convicts the world of sin, regenerates those who repent and believe and He sanctifies and empowers the believers for godly living and service. He is given to each believer and indwells each believer. The Holy Spirit sovereignly bestows and distributes His gifts within the Church. His gifts are given for the purpose of ministry and the edification of believers. Gifted believers become God's gift to his

Church. The Spirit places priority on grace and the fruit of the Spirit above the gifts. No one gift of the Spirit is distributed to all believers. Strict regulatory restrictions are given by the Spirit for the use of only one gift - speaking in tongues.

SECTION 5. HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Bible is in its entirety the uniquely inscripturated Word of God, given through men inspired by God. The divine initiative, activity and superintendence in the process of inspiration imparts inerrancy to the original documents. By God's supernatural providence the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament canon were preserved with such integrity that for all intents and purposes, our translations are based on an adequate equivalent to the autographs of Scripture. They are the revealed will of God and are therefore the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. It is a present day ministry of the Holy Spirit to teach us and to guide us into all truth regarding the understanding, interpretation and application of the Holy Scriptures.

SECTION 6. THE CHURCH

We believe in the universal body of Christ composed of all true believers in Christ which is the Church of which Christ is the Head. All who are born again are baptized into this one Church by the Holy Spirit. Christ builds his own Church. This Church does not become fractured by the fact that there is more than one denomination, nor does it become one through church union, for there can never be more than one true body of Christ and its membership record is in heaven, not on earth. All true Christians are members of one another. Christ has commissioned his Church to obey his Great Commission and to reach the whole world with the Gospel. The Word of God is to be preached by men divinely called; the sacraments or ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper) are to be duly administered; worship services are to be maintained for the praise of God, the edification of believers and the conversion of the lost to Christ as Savior and Lord.

SECTION 7. THE SACRAMENTS

We concur with the fathers of the Protestant Reformation that a sacrament has three distinguishing marks: it was explicitly commanded by Christ; it is a visible symbol of an invisible grace; and it is viewed as the seal of the covenant God has made with us in Christ. We believe that Christ established two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

We believe that baptism witnesses to a person's faith in Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, the acceptance of the benefits of Christ's atoning death, and the intention to live a life of holiness and righteousness in obedience to the teachings of Scripture. Baptism is not the means nor condition of salvation, but symbolizes one's being cleansed from sins, being incorporated into Christ, and being initiated into the Church through the inward baptism of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is also a public testimony of a good conscience towards God, and, as such, is the privilege and duty of every believer.

Though many devout Christians practice infant baptism, we administer baptism only to those who exercise personal faith in Christ and bear witness to saving grace. We practice infant dedication as an expression of the faith of the parents and their intention to rear their child in the knowledge of the Christian faith and in the fellowship of the Church. The

mode of baptism is left to the judgment and understanding of each believer.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper or Holy Communion is a symbol of the atoning sacrificial death of Christ for the sin of the world. For those who rightly and worthily receive communion, the broken bread is, by faith, a spiritual partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is, by faith, a spiritual partaking of the blood of Christ. To receive this sacrament unworthily is to bring condemnation upon oneself. Participation in the Lord's Table is a proclamation of Christ's death, a declaration of his presence among his people, and an affirmation of his coming again. The manner of observing the Lord's Supper is not prescribed in Scripture.

SECTION 8. THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

We believe that man was created in the image of God and was innocent and pure. He was endowed with the ability to choose between right and wrong and he was thus morally responsible. By his free choice Adam rebelled against God, fell from original innocence and purity and received a fallen and sinful nature. All human beings born after Adam are born with this sinful nature and by their own sinful deeds each has become guilty before God. Apart from the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, each person is not only entirely destitute of holiness, but is inclined to evil, and only evil continually; is lost in sin, dead in trespasses; and is without God and without hope.

SECTION 9. JUSTIFICATION

We believe that penitent sinners are justified, pardoned of all guilt, released from the penalty of sins committed and accepted as righteous people, not on the basis of the merits or efforts of the sinner, but only upon the basis of the atonement by Jesus Christ and the faith of the sinner in Christ's actions. Justification is the gracious judicial act of God fully acquitting the repenting and believing sinner.

SECTION 10. REGENERATION AND ADOPTION

We believe that regeneration or the new birth is the gracious work of God changing the moral nature of the repentant believer from darkness to light, from nature to grace, from death to life, and from bondage of sin to liberty in Christ. The believer becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, is born of the Spirit and enters into a life of peace with God, obedience to the Word and will of God and love for all.

Adoption is the gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a child of God with the privilege of access to the Father, membership in the family of God and inheritance with Christ. Justification, regeneration and adoption are simultaneous in the heart of the repentant believer.

The Holy Spirit is the witness to salvation by the inner assurance He imparts to the believer. The fruit of His life within the soul of the believer is manifested as peace with God, love for the children of God, joy with Christ, the guidance of the Spirit and righteous conduct. Good works are the visible fruit of a life lived in Christ. They are not the condition of salvation but are the result of salvation.

SECTION 11. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that holiness is the will of God for His people. Sanctification is the work of God through the Spirit by which He makes believers holy. The experience of sanctification, which involves both crisis and process, begins when Christian trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and is baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ's body, the Church. The gift of the Holy Spirit enables believers to be holy in their conduct as they offer themselves to God. The normal Christian life is one of total surrender to God and a growing conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. This victorious lifestyle is nurtured by faith through prayer, study of the Scripture, active participation in the Church's worship, and witnessing, as well as through a continual infilling of the Spirit. God, who began the good work in the believer, will bring it to completion in the glorification of the individual believer and in the Church corporately when Christ returns for his bride.

SECTION 12. THE LORD'S DAY

We believe that Sunday is the Lord's Day and that it commemorates our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection from the grave. It is an emblem of our eternal rest in heaven. It is essential to the welfare of the civil community and to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church. It should be reverently observed as a day of public worship and holy rest.

SECTION 13. THE FUTURE STATE

We believe in the imminent, bodily, visible and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to translate his Church, to reign with his Church, and to judge the wicked and Satan.

There will be the bodily resurrection of both the saved and the unsaved.

There will be eternal life and blessedness in heaven for the saved where they will be in the immediate presence of God. There will be the eternal death and punishment for the unsaved in hell, the lake of fire, where they shall consciously share the company of the damned in eternal separation from God.

SECTION 14. CHRISTIAN LIVING

We believe that the complement of orthodoxy must be a vital and viable Christian life. This simply means that the rational affirmations of a believer must be accompanied by realigned priorities and practices. The Apostle Peter exhorted the early followers of Christ that "as He who has called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct." In every

letter the Apostle Paul included ethical exhortations, underscoring those positive qualities and practices which should mark out the lives of those who are followers of Christ. In the letter to the churches of Galatia, he contrasted the lives of those who walk in the Spirit and bear the fruit of the Spirit and those who walk “in the flesh” and consequently manifest the works of the flesh. While no believer can profess to have perfected the practice of the Christian living, each one ought to evidence the process of being conformed to the image of God’s Son.

Because believers are “sinners saved by grace,” and in every instance are turning from a life of habits and practices which are contrary to the holiness of God, it was necessary for the apostles to insist that they could not follow Christ and continue to live as they had previously. Thus the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. He specifically mentions those engaging in fornication, idolaters, adulterers, those acting as partners in unnatural vice, homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and extortionists. In the first chapter of Romans, he describes the unrighteous as those with impure lusts; those who dishonor their bodies; women who exchange natural relations for unnatural and men who gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men; and those who were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, gossipers, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. These practices are no more acceptable now than they were then.

We believe that God alone has ultimate authority to prescribe and describe the marital relationship. God’s plan for human sexuality is to be expressed only within the context of marriage. God created man and woman as unique biological persons made to complete each other. God instituted lifelong monogamous marriage between male and female as the foundation of the family and the basic structure of human society. For this reason, we believe that marriage is exclusively the union of one genetic man and one genetic woman. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9)

It is significant that in the lists above, the Apostle makes no reference to divorce, a major cause for concern in our time. However, our Lord opposed those who opted for divorce on demand, arguing that the only sanction for divorce is violation of the marriage covenant. We believe that in instance of marital difficulty, the will of God is for reconciliation rather than for dissolution of the marriage covenant. When divorce occurs for non-Biblical reasons and the forgiveness of God has been received, we believe that this sin is to be treated as any other sin that has been forgiven.

While WORLD GOSPEL CHURCH never wishes to close its doors of ministry to anyone seeking to know Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, we cannot receive those who continue in practice contrary to Scripture as members of the Church, nor appoint them to places of leadership in the Church, since Scripture itself states explicitly that they are not members of the Kingdom of God. We must reach out with compassion and love; but we cannot act in such a way that by our actions we indicate approval of their practices.