

Appendix A

New Life City Church Constitution

WHAT WE BELIEVE

PREAMBLE

New Life City Church stands firmly in the mainstream of historical Christianity. It takes the Bible as its all-sufficient source of faith and practice, and subscribes to the historic creeds of the universal church.

I. HOLY SCRIPTURES

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God¹ by which we understand the whole Bible to be inspired in the sense that holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the very words of Scripture.² Divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the original writings. The whole Bible in the original is, therefore, without error and, as such, is infallible, absolutely supreme and sufficient in authority in all matters of faith and practice.³ The Bible does not simply contain the Word of God, but is, in reality, the complete revelation and Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. Christian believers today receive spiritual illumination to enable them to understand the Scriptures,⁴ but God does not grant new revelations which are contrary or additional to inspired biblical truth.⁵

II. THE GODHEAD

The Godhead exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, having the same nature and attributes and are worthy of the same homage, confidence, and obedience.⁶

1. THE FATHER

The Father exists eternally as the Creator of heaven and earth, the Giver of the Law, to whom all things will be subjected, so that He may be all in all.⁷

2. THE SON

The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of the Father, is true God and true man.⁸ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,⁹ and by His sinless life, miracles and teaching, gave full revelation of the Father.¹⁰ He died upon the cross, the Just for the unjust, as a substitutionary sacrifice.¹¹ He rose from the dead.¹² He is now at the right hand of the majesty on high as our great High Priest.¹³ He will come again to establish His kingdom in righteousness and peace.¹⁴

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is also God, performing actions and possessing the attributes of Deity.¹⁵ His personality is shown by the fact that He has personal characteristics and that individuals may relate to Him as a person.¹⁶

III. ANGELS

1. CLASSIFICATION

Angels were created as intelligent and powerful beings to do the will of God and worship Him.¹⁷ However, Satan, the originator of sin, fell through pride and was followed by those angels who rebelled against God. These fallen angels or demons are active in opposing the purposes of God.¹⁸ Those who remained faithful continue before the throne of God and serve as ministering spirits.¹⁹

2. THE BELIEVER AND DEMONS

Demons attempt to thwart God's purposes; however, in Christ, the believer may have complete liberty from the influence of demons.²⁰ He cannot be possessed by them because his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in which Christ dwells as Lord.²¹

¹ 2 Tim. 3:16,17 ² 2 Pet. 1:20,21 ³ Psa. 119:160a; Matt. 5:17,18 ⁴ 1 Cor. 2:12-14 ⁵ Prov. 30:5,6 ⁶ Matt. 3:16,17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14

⁷ Gen. 1:1; 1 Cor. 15:28 ⁸ John 1:1,14; 10:30; 17; Phil. 2:6,7; Heb. 1:8 ⁹ Luke 1:26-35 ¹⁰ John 12:49; Acts 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26

¹¹ Rom. 5:6,8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18 ¹² Matt. 28:6; 1 Cor. 15:4,20 ¹³ Acts 1:9-11; 2:33; Heb. 8:1 ¹⁴ Matt. 25:31 ¹⁵ Acts 5:3,4 ¹⁶ John 16:13-14

¹⁷ Psa. 103:20; Rev. 5:11,12 ¹⁸ Isa. 14:12-17 ¹⁹ Ezek. 28:11-19; Eph. 6:11,12; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 6 ²⁰ Heb. 1:14 ²¹ Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; 4:1-4

²¹ Matt. 6:24; 1 Cor. 6:19,20

IV. MAN

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God.¹ He fell through sin and, as a consequence, incurred both spiritual and physical death.² Spiritual death and the depravity of human nature have been transmitted to the entire human race³ with the exception of the Man Christ Jesus.⁴ Man can be saved only through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

V. SALVATION

Salvation has been provided for all men through the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.⁶ It is the only perfect redemption and substitutionary atonement for all the sins of the world, both original and actual. His atoning work has been proven by His resurrection from the dead.⁷ Those who repent and believe in Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and receive eternal life.⁸ Furthermore, in the atonement, divine healing was provided for all believers.⁹

1. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Man can be born again only through faith in Christ. Repentance, a vital part of believing, is a complete change of mind wrought by the Holy Spirit,¹⁰ turning a person to God from sin.

2. REGENERATION

Regeneration is a creative work of the Holy Spirit by which man is born again and receives spiritual life.¹¹

3. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is a judicial act of God by which the sinner is declared righteous solely on the basis of his acceptance of Christ as Saviour.¹²

VI. THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

1. ASSURANCE

Assurance of salvation is the privilege of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ,¹³ resulting in love, gratitude and obedience toward God.¹⁴

2. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is dedication to God and separation from evil.¹⁵ In experience it is both instantaneous¹⁶ and progressive.¹⁷ It is produced in the life of the believer by his appropriation of the power of Christ's blood and risen life through the Person of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ He draws the believer's attention to Christ, teaches him through the Word and produces the character of Christ within him.¹⁹ Believers who sin must repent and seek forgiveness through faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.²⁰

3. BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is an ongoing experience in which the believer yields control of himself to the Holy Spirit.²¹ Through this he comes to know Christ in a more intimate way,²² and receives power to witness and grow spiritually.²³ Believers should earnestly yield to the Holy Spirit according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴

4. THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural abilities given by God through the exercising of which believers are enabled to minister effectively and directly in particular situations.²⁵ They serve the dual function of building up the Church, and of demonstrating the presence of God within His Church.²⁶

5. DIVINE HEALING

Divine healing provided in the atonement of Christ²⁷ is the privilege of all believers. Prayer for the sick and gifts of healing are encouraged and practised.²⁸

¹ Gen. 1:26; 2:7 ² Rom. 5:12; James 1:14,15 ³ Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-19,23 ⁴ Heb. 7:26 ⁵ John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5,6 ⁶ Isa. 53:3-6; John 12:32,33; 1 Pet. 2:24 ⁷ Acts 2:36; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:14,17,20; Heb. 10:12; 1 John 2:2 ⁸ Acts 20:21; 1 Pet. 1:23,25 ⁹ Isa. 53:4,5; Matt. 8:16b, 17 ¹⁰ Isa. 55:7; Acts. 17:30; Gal. 3:22,26; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:10-13 ¹¹ John 3:3b,5b,7; 2 Cor. 5:17,18a; 1 Pet. 1:23 ¹² Rom. 3:24; 4:3-5; 5:1-2 ¹³ John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39 ¹⁴ John 14:23; Col. 3:17; 1 John 2:6 ¹⁵ 2 Cor. 6:14; 7:1 ¹⁶ John 17:17,19; Heb. 10:10,14 ¹⁷ 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Tim. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 1:14-16 ¹⁸ Rom. 6:11,13,14,18 ¹⁹ 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22,23; 2 Pet. 1:3-4 ²⁰ 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2 ²¹ Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; Eph. 5:18 ²² John 16:13-15 ²³ 2 Cor. 3:18; Acts 1:8 ²⁴ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; ²⁵ Cor. 12:4-11 ²⁶ 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:12,24-25 ²⁷ Matt. 8:16,17 ²⁸ 1 Cor. 12:28-30; James 5:14

VII. THE CHURCH

1. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

All who are born again are members of the universal church, which is the Body and Bride of Christ.¹

2. THE LOCAL CHURCH

A. Purpose

The local church is a body of believers in Christ who have joined together to function as a part of the universal church.² The local church is ordained by God and provides a context in which believers corporately worship God,³ observe the ordinances of the church, are instructed in the faith and are equipped for the evangelization of the world.⁴

(a) The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbol, memorial and proclamation of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This ordinance of communion is to be participated in by believers until Christ's return.⁵

(b) Water Baptism

Water baptism signifies the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and is practiced by immersion.⁶

C. Ministry

A divinely called and ordained ministry is the provision of the Lord to give leadership to the church as it fulfills its purposes.⁷

VIII. THE END OF TIME

1. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE DEAD

At death the souls of the believers pass immediately into the presence of Christ,⁸ and these remain in constant bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body. ⁹The souls of the unbelievers remain after death conscious of condemnation¹⁰ until the final bodily resurrection and judgment of the unjust.¹¹

2. THE RAPTURE

The rapture, the blessed hope of the church, is the imminent coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself His own, both the living who shall be transformed, and the dead in Christ who shall be resurrected.¹² This event takes place before the wrath of God is poured out during the tribulation. Believers then will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to faithfulness in Christian service.¹³

3. THE TRIBULATION

The tribulation will be a time of judgment on the whole earth.¹⁴ During this period the Antichrist will emerge to offer false hope to the nations.¹⁵

4. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The return of Christ to earth in power and great glory will conclude the great tribulation with the victory at Armageddon,¹⁶ the defeat of Antichrist and the binding of Satan.¹⁷ He will introduce the millennial age,¹⁸ restore Israel to her own land, lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, and bring the whole world to the knowledge of God.¹⁹

5. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

There will be a final judgment in which the unbelieving dead will be raised and judged at the great white throne, according to their works.²⁰ The beast and false prophet, the devil and his angels, and whoever is not found in the Book of Life, shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to annihilation but to everlasting punishment, which is the second death.²¹

¹ 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:25b; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 3:15 ² Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 16:19 ³ John 4:23; Acts 20:7 ⁴ Acts 1:8; 11:19-24; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 5:2 ⁵ Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26 ⁶ Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38,41; 8:36-39; Rom. 6:3-5 ⁷ Acts 6:2b-4c; 13:2-4a; 14:23; Eph. 4:8,11-13 ⁸ 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21,23-24 ⁹ Rom. 8:22,23; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; 2 Cor. 5:1,4b ¹⁰ Luke 16:22-31; John 3:36 ¹¹ Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:11-15 ¹² 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Titus 2:13 ¹³ Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10 ¹⁴ Matt. 24:15,21-22; 1 Thess. 5:1-3 ¹⁵ 2 Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:11-18 ¹⁶ Matt. 24:27,30; Luke 17:24,26-30 ¹⁷ Rev. 16:12-16; 17:8,12-14; 19:11-20:3 ¹⁸ Psa. 2:6-12; Dan. 2:44-45; Luke 22:29-30; Rev. 3:21; 20:6 ¹⁹ Isa. 1:24-27; 2:1-4; Zech. 14:3,4,9; Rom. 8:19-23; Rev. 22:3 ²⁰ Dan. 7:9-10; John 12:48; Rom. 2:2,6,11,16; Rev. 14:9-11; 20:11-15 ²¹ Matt. 25:41b; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10,15; 21:8

6. THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS The righteous will share the glory of God in the new heaven and the new earth for eternity.¹

IX. GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

1. MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage is a provision of God whereby a man and a woman enter into a lifelong relationship² through a marriage ceremony which is recognized by the church and legally sanctioned by the state. Marriage establishes a "one-flesh" relationship³ which goes beyond a physical union and is more than either a temporary relationship of convenience intended to provide personal pleasure or a contract which binds two people together in a legal partnership. Marriage establishes an emotional and spiritual oneness which enables both partners to respond to the spiritual, physical and social needs of the other.⁴ It provides the Biblical context for the procreation of children. Marriage is to be an exclusive relationship that is maintained in purity.⁵ It is intended by God to be a permanent relationship. It is a witness to the world of the relationship between Christ and His Church.⁶ Marriage requires a commitment of love, perseverance and faith. Because of its sanctity and permanence, marriage should be treated with seriousness and entered into only after counsel and prayer for God's guidance. Christians should choose wisely whom they marry and seek pre-marital counselling.⁷ As marriage is a life long commitment and a spiritual union, we recommend that it should be a union between two believers. An individual who becomes a believer after marriage should remain with his or her partner in peace, and should give witness to the gospel in the home.⁸ The Bible holds family life as a position of trust and responsibility. The home is a stabilizing force in society, a place of nurture, counsel, and safety for children.⁹ Marriage may only be broken by "porneia" which is understood as marital unfaithfulness¹⁰ involving adultery, homosexuality, or incest. While the Scriptures give evidence that the marriage vow and "one-flesh" union are broken by such acts, and therefore do recognize the breaking of the marriage relationship, the Scriptures do recommend that the most desirable option would be reconciliation.¹¹

2. DIVORCE

We believe that divorce is not God's intention. It is God's concession to the "hardness of men's hearts."¹² We, therefore, discourage divorce by all lawful means and teaching. Our objective is reconciliation and the healing of the marriage union where possible. Marital unfaithfulness should not be considered so much an occasion or opportunity for divorce but rather an opportunity for Christian grace, forgiveness, and restoration. Divorce in our society is a termination of a marriage through a legal process authorized by the State. While the Church recognizes this legal process as an appropriate means to facilitate the permanent separation of spouses, the Church restricts the idea of divorce, in the sense of dissolution of marriage, to reasons specified by the Scriptures. The weight of the Biblical record is negative and the explicit statement is made, "God hates divorce."¹³ Divorce is more than an action of the courts which breaks the legal contract between the partners in a marriage. It is also the fracture of a unique human relationship between a male and a female. Divorce has profound consequences for the children. Divorce is evidence of the sinful nature expressed in human failure. Jesus gives one explicit cause for the dissolution of marriage: "porneia" or marital unfaithfulness. Where all attempts at reconciliation have failed and a divorce has been finalized, we extend Christ's love and compassion.

3. REMARRIAGE

Remarriage is the union, legally sanctioned by the State, of a man and woman, one or both of whom have been previously married. It is regarded as acceptable by the Scriptures in the event of the death of the former spouse. It is also regarded as acceptable when there has been sexual immorality on the part of the former partner or the former partner has remarried.

4. TITHING

Tithing was divinely instituted by God under the old covenant and was compulsory upon the people who worshipped God.¹⁴ Under the new covenant we are not bound by arbitrary laws; but the principles of right and wrong, as expressed by the law, are fulfilled in the believer's life through grace. Grace should produce as much as, or more than, law demanded. Regular systematic giving is clearly taught in the New Testament. It is known as the grace of giving.¹⁵ All Christians should conscientiously and systematically give their income to God.

¹ Matt. 13:43; John 17:24; 2 Pet. 3:13; Heb. 11:10; Rev. 21:1-2,10,22-23 ² Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:6 ³ Matt. 19:5; Mal. 2:15 ⁴ Gen. 2:18, 1 Cor. 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4 ⁵ Eph. 5:3,26,27 ⁶ Eph. 5:25,31,32 ⁷ 2 Cor. 6:14,15 ⁸ 1 Cor. 7:12-14,16 ⁹ Eph. 6:4 ¹⁰ Matt. 5:32; 19:9 ¹¹ Eph. 4:32 ¹² Matt. 19:8 ¹³ Mal. 2:16 ¹⁴ Lev. 27:30-32; Mal. 3:10 ¹⁵ 2 Cor. 9:6-15