

## STATEMENT OF FAITH OF WILLOW OAK BAPTIST CHURCH

Willow Oak Baptist Church embraces the following Statement of Faith as an expression of our fundamental, religious beliefs. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We believe this Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible, and therefore, is binding upon all members of Willow Oak Baptist Church. All teaching in the church, and literature used in the church, shall be in agreement with the Statement of Faith.

### **(1) The Scriptures**

The sole basis of our belief is the Bible, composed of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. We believe that Scripture in its entirety originated with God, and that it was given through the instrumentality of chosen men. Scripture speaks with the authority of God, and at the same time reflects the backgrounds, styles and vocabularies of the human authors. We hold that the Scriptures are infallible and inerrant in the original manuscripts that have been miraculously preserved and transmitted by God down to the present day. There are both accurate and inaccurate translations made from the Greek and Hebrew writings. We hold that there are several accurate translations, but we do not hold any translation to be inspired on an equal plane with the original manuscripts. The Scriptures are the final authority on all matters of faith and practice, and there are no other writings similarly inspired by God. We believe that the Bible is the completed Word of God, and that any other source of new revelation cannot be from God and is to be rejected. (*Matthew 5:18; Luke 24:25-27; 2Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1Peter 1:10-12; 2Peter 1:19-21*)

### **(2) The Godhead – The Trinity**

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections. (*Genesis 1:1 & 26; 3:22; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 32:3-4; Isaiah 44:6; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:1-2 & 14; 4:23-24; 14:8-10, 15-18 & 26; Acts 5:3-4; 2Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-3 & 8; 1Peter 1:1-2*)

#### **(a) God – The Father**

We believe in God the Father, that perfect, spiritual, personal Being who is the Creator, Lord, and Judge over all that exists. While He is beyond man's ability to know totally, He has revealed Himself in creation, His Word, and His Son. He is self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal and infinite, unchangeable, holy and righteous, good and loving, true, just, sovereign and almighty, all-knowing and all-wise, and present everywhere. (*Exodus 3:14; 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Job 12:12-18; Psalms 9:7; 31:5; 90:2; 93; 97:2; 139; Isaiah 6:1-3; Jeremiah 23:23-24; 32:17-19; Malachi 3:6; John 5:26; Acts 17:24-28; 1Timothy 6:15-16; Titus 1:2; James 1:17; 1Peter 1:15-16; 1John 4:16*)

#### **(b) God – The Son**

We believe Jesus Christ existed as God from eternity past. He flawlessly expresses God's nature and will. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and was fully man, yet without sin. While

retaining all of the attributes of deity, He humbled Himself as a son to serve the Father's redemptive plan. Thus, He died on a cross, was buried, resurrected, and exalted as Lord at the Father's right hand. (*Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:1-4 & 14; Acts 1:9-11; 2:21-36; Romans 3:24-25; 8:33-34; 1Corinthians 15:3-8; 2Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:6-7; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:12-22; Hebrews 1; 7:25-27; 9:24-26; 1Peter 1:3-5; 2:24; 1John 2:1-2*)

### **(c) God – The Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, coequal and coexistent with God. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He comforts, regenerates, seals, bears witness, guides, teaches, and empowers us to minister and live godly lives. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and Baptized into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. We believe the New Testament distinguishes between being baptized with the Spirit (which is a work of the Spirit taking place only at conversion) and being filled with the Spirit (which is a daily yielding to the control of the Spirit). (*Luke 2:25-30; 12:11-12; John 14:15-17 & 26; 16:7-11; Acts 1:8; 5:3-4; 13:1-3; 20:28; Romans 8:8-9; 15:13-16; 1Corinthians 3:16-17; 12:12-14; 2Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18-21; Titus 3:4-5; 2Peter 1:21*)

We believe that Spiritual gifts are particular supernatural abilities given by God for service. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in His selection and bestowal of gifts to every believer for the benefit of the whole Church. We believe the following gifts were temporary, and were given for the establishing of the Church prior to God's completing the revelation of scripture: Apostles, Prophets (forth-tellers), Miracles, Healings, Discerning of Spirits, Word of Knowledge, Word of Wisdom, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness and death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection. However, God sovereignly chooses at times to answer the prayers of believers for physical healing. We believe that the permanent spiritual gifts operational today for believers are: Discernment (Prophecy), Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Administration, and Showing Mercy. The gifts given to the church corporately are: Pastor-Teacher and Evangelist (Missionary). (*Romans 12:3-8; 1Corinthians Chapters 12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1Peter 4:7-11*)

### **(3) Creation - General**

We believe the Genesis account of creation as being neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of the direct and immediate creative acts of God without any evolutionary process. In the beginning, God created the universe and all the things therein out of nothing by simply speaking them into existence, thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom and goodness. By His sovereign power He continues to sustain His creation. Man, with spirit, soul and body, was created by a direct work of God, and not from previously existing forms of life. All men are descended from the historical Adam and Eve, first parents of the entire human race. (*Genesis: Chapters 1 & 2; Job 38:4-11; Psalms 148:1-5; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17*)

#### **(4) Angels and Demons**

##### **(a) Creation of Angels**

We believe that God originally created all angels holy, but since Satan's rebellion against God, angels now exist as either unfallen or fallen. (*Matthew 25:41; Ephesians 6:10-12; Colossians 1:16; 1Timothy 5:21; Jude 6; Revelation 12:7-10*)

##### **(b) Satan – the Devil**

We believe that Satan was the highest of all of God's angels who led a rebellion against God that brought God's judgment against him and his wicked angels. God will eventually cast Satan and his demons into Hell or the Lake of Fire where they will remain forever. Today, Satan is free to roam the earth, and has access to heaven where he accuses the brethren. Satan is more powerful than men, and is king of the demons. Satan is a deceiver who can imitate God's work, and can appear as an angel of light. (*Isaiah 14:4-23; Ezekiel 28:12-19; Luke 11:14-18; 2Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:10-12; 2Thessalonians 2:3-10; 1Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:7-10; 20:10-15*)

##### **(c) Wicked Angels – Demons or Fallen Angels**

All angels were created holy yet those that followed Satan in his rebellion against God became identified as Satan's angels. God judged the fallen angels along with Satan, and they too will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Wicked angels oppose God's plan and carry out Satan's plan. They hinder, afflict and deceive God's children. Demons are spirit beings that possess personality and intelligence, and can inhabit animals or unsaved humans. (*Matthew 8:28-32, 25:41; Acts 16:16-18; 2Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:11-12; 1Timothy 4:1-2; 2Peter 2:4*)

##### **(d) Good Angels – The Angels of God**

Good angels did not follow Satan when he rebelled against God. Christ created angels of various ranks, yet all are subject to Him. Angels are more intelligent and powerful than men. Angels do not marry. They guide the affairs of nations, yet look after and guard individual Christians. (*Luke 20:34-36; Acts 8:26-29; Hebrews 1; 1Peter 3:22; 2Peter 2:11*)

#### **(5) Man**

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God to bring Him glory. God made man with body, soul and spirit. Mankind was formed with personality that consists of intellect, emotion and will. As such, God created mankind as rational and feeling persons with a free will to choose between sin and good. With Adam's original decision to sin against God, the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Adam's sin brought upon the human race, not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God. Mankind is totally depraved, and of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. However, God provided a means where man can obtain spiritual life and salvation through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:17; 5:2-3; 6:5; 9:6; Psalms 14:1-3; 51:1-5; Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:53; Romans 3:10-18; 3:22-23; 5:12; 6:23; 8:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19*)

#### **(6) The Fall and Redemption of Man**

We believe all men, in Adam, were made in the image of God. However, Adam's original sin, his act of willful disobedience, caused spiritual death, which is separation from God. Since Adam took on a sin nature, his

heritage also received that sin nature, and the consequence of his sin was passed on to the entire human race. It is only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ in His substitutionary death for fallen man that we can be saved from spiritual death and reconciled to fellowship with God. (*Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6; John 3:3; 3:16; 3:36; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:22-28; 5:8; 5:12-19; 6:23; Galatians 2:16-21; Ephesians 1:5-7; 2:8-10; Colossians 1:12-14; Titus 3:5-7; Hebrews 9:22-28; 1Peter 1:18-20*)

### **(7) Human Destiny – Heaven or Hell**

People will exist forever in one of two literal places called Heaven or Hell. Heaven is a place of bliss and joy and worship of God. Hell, on the other hand, is a literal burning lake of fire and place of torments. We will exist eternally in Heaven united with God through forgiveness and salvation, or we will exist eternally in Hell separated from God by sin. (*Psalms 16:10; Matthew 6:9-10; 10:28; 19:21; 22:30; Mark 13:32; Luke 6:22-23; 15:7; 16:22-24; John 3:14-18 & 36; Romans 6:23; 1Corinthians 2:7-9; Revelation 20:14-15*)

### **(8) Salvation**

We believe that salvation is the gift of God by grace and is received by man only through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. We believe that when an unsaved person exercises faith in Christ and His death on the cross as payment for his sin, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life and from the old creation into the new. New believers are immediately justified, accepted before the Father according as Christ His Son is accepted, loved as Christ is loved, having their place and portion as linked to Him, and are one with Him forever. We also believe that the greatest degree of reformation, the highest attainment of morality, the most attractive culture, baptism or another ordinance, cannot help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven. Only by a new nature imparted from God, may one obtain salvation and thus become a child of God.

We believe that people have a free will to choose Christ and salvation, and whosoever will may come. On the other hand, God chooses or elects people to salvation. Election does not negate the responsibility of people to repent and receive Christ as Savior and Lord, nor does it negate the Christian's responsibility to preach the Gospel to every creature. God has chosen people from every nation, tribe and language. Their names were written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world. The elect were not chosen because of good qualities or deeds foreseen in them, but were chosen by the sovereign will of God. The tension inherent in the doctrine of election is probably unresolvable and must be left among the mysteries impenetrable to our sinful intellects. (*Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 8:34; John 1:12-13; 3:16-18 & 36; 5:24; 6:37 & 44; 17:17 & 23; Acts 13:8 & 38-39; Romans 5:1 & 6-9; 9:11-16; 2Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13-14; 6:15; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:8-10; Philippians 3:4-9; 2Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5; James 1:17-18; 1Peter 1:1-2, 18-19 & 23; 2Peter 3:18; 1John 5:11-13; Revelation 7:9-10; 13:8; 17:8 & 22:17*)

### **(9) Eternal Security**

The salvation of every believer is secure for all eternity from the moment of receiving Christ as personal Savior. We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power, not by self-effort, and are thus secure in Christ forever. The security is guaranteed by the fact that the life that is imparted is eternal life by the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit. (*John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 29-30 & 38-39; 1Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1Peter 1:3-5; Jude 24*)

## **(10) Two Natures of the Believer**

We believe that every saved person possesses two natures, with provision made for victory of the new nature over the old nature through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and, that all claims to the eradication of the old nature in this life are unscriptural. (*Romans 6:13; 7:14-25; 8:12-13; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10; 1Peter 1:14-16*)

## **(11) Sanctification**

The Bible refers to Christians as “saints” – those who have been set apart unto God. We believe that sanctification, that is the setting apart unto God, is threefold: (1) “Positional” sanctification, which means that a person now stands before God as holy. Sanctification is already complete for every saved person because our perfect representative Jesus Christ took all our ungodliness away through His sacrifice. (2) However, the believer retains his sin nature in this life so that his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. There is therefore, a “Progressive” sanctification wherein the Christian is to “grow in grace” and to “be changed” into the likeness of Christ by the unhindered power of the Spirit. (3) We believe also, that the child of God will “ultimately” be fully sanctified in Christ when he shall see his Lord and shall be “like Him.” While sinless perfection is not possible in this life, the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, in concert with the Scriptures, will progressively purify us as we yield control of our lives to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we seek to be separate from sin in every thought, word, deed and association. (*Matthew 6:24; John 17:14-19; Romans 12:1-2; 1Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:11; 2Corinthians 3:18; 6:14-17, 7:1; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:11-14 & 22-24; 5:1-13 & 25-27; Colossians 1:21-22 & 28; 1Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23; Titus 2:12; Hebrews 10:10 & 14; 12:10-11; James 4:4-8; 1John 2:15-16; 3:2*)

## **(12) Responsibility of the Believer**

We believe that all believers should walk by the Spirit in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Lord and Savior. We believe that it is the responsibility of all believers to remember the work of the Lord in prayer, to support it with their means that should be used to edify the body of Christ, to promote unity within the body of Christ, and to minister in the local church through their spiritual gifts and talents. (*Romans 12:1-8; 14:12-13; 1Corinthians 12:12-14; 16:1-2; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 9:6-11; Ephesians 4:11-16*)

## **(13) Witnessing and Missions**

We believe that the obligation of every believer is to witness by life and by word to the truths of the Holy Scriptures and to seek to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are part of God’s Great Commission to reach out to neighbors, communities, and other parts of the world. This implies being part of something bigger than any particular local church. Having a balanced outlook is necessary for the local church in order to keep the world and local outreach in perspective. (*Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 16:8-11; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:12-17; 2Corinthians 5:17-6:2*)

## **(14) Church Ordinances**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted and authorized the local church to carry on two pictorial ordinances: Water Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

### **(a) Baptism**

We believe baptism was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ to symbolize the work of the Holy Spirit identifying the believer with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Baptism is commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ and was practiced by the New Testament Church. We practice the ordinance of

baptism by immersion after conversion and believe that it is the solemn responsibility of every believer to publicly bear this testimony of trust in Jesus Christ by submitting to believer's baptism. (*Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38-44; 8:35-40; 10:43-48; Romans 6:3-9; Colossians 2:12-14*)

#### **(b) The Lord's Supper**

We believe the Lord's Supper was instituted as a memorial that instructs the body of believers by focusing the believer's worship upon Christ and His work on the cross. This taking of the bread and cup commemorates the death of Christ, symbolizing His broken body and shed blood. We are instructed to observe the Lord's Supper continually, in order to remember the Lord Jesus Christ's act of self-sacrifice on our behalf. It is a time of self-examination, consecration, and renewal of obedience to the Lord. (*Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:7-20; 1Corinthians 10:16-22; 11:17-34*)

#### **(15) Giving**

We believe that, because of the gracious work of God in our lives, we love Him in return. This results in, not only giving ourselves to Him, but also cheerfully giving our time and money to support His work and to meet human needs, both here and around the world. Thus, giving is one joyful aspect of our worship, and carries God's promise of blessing to those who give out of a joyous heart. In regard to tithing, we believe that tithing was practiced before the Law and during the Law. In the New Testament era, tithing is not a law, but is an act of worship, and establishes a minimal standard upon which we can grow to generosity. Each believer is to give willingly and not under compulsion. Our individual giving should be with liberality as the Lord directs, and according to ability as the Lord prospers us. (*Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 6:38; 1Corinthians 16:1-3; 2Corinthians 8 & 9; Hebrews 13:15-16*)

#### **(16) The Family**

We believe that God founded the Family, which is His most important institution, and is the foundational unit of society. The husband is to love, provide for, lead spiritually, and protect his wife. The wife is to respect and support her husband, and be a helpmate. Both husband and wife are admonished to serve each other under the Lordship of Christ. Children are to respect, honor, and obey their parents, because this pleases God and brings His blessings.

Children belong to God, but are entrusted to parents, who are responsible for their training in all areas. In order to produce many godly generations, parental training must develop their faith, build strong character, and instill a knowledge and understanding of the truth. Parents are to protect their children from physical, social, mental, and spiritual harm, and provide a wholesome environment to nurture their children's growth. (*Genesis 2:18-25, Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Proverbs 22:6; Mark 7:9-13; Ephesians 5:18-6:4; Colossians 3:12-21; 1Timothy 5:8; 1Peter 3:1-7*)

#### **(17) The Church**

We believe that the spiritual Body and Bride of Christ is composed of all believers of all races, colors and nations, who come to faith in Christ during the Church Age, and does not include Old Testament Saints. It is formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and exists in two aspects, universal and local.

We believe the local church is the spiritual body of Christ ministering in a specific location. It is a congregation of baptized believers associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel. The local church is to observe the ordinances of Christ, is governed by His laws, and is to exercise the gifts, rights and privileges

invested in them by His Word. The officers of the church are Pastor (Elder) who leads the body, and Deacons who serve the body, and whose qualifications, claims and responsibilities are clearly defined in the Scriptures. The true mission of the church is to exalt Christ, edify the believers, and evangelize the lost. (*Matthew 16:15-18, 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47, 6:3, 13:1-4; 20:28; 1Corinthians 12:4-28; Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:11-22, 3:1-6, 4:8-16; 5:24-30; Philippians 1:1-6; Colossians 1:18; 1Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-14; Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:17; 1Peter 5:1-4*)

### **(18) Civil Government**

We believe that God ordains civil government. Government's responsibility is to maintain order and provide protection by encouraging right living and discouraging doing evil. The Christian's responsibility is to obey its laws, pray for its leaders, and influence its decisions from without or from within. When governmental laws require us to disobey God's higher laws, as clearly taught in the Scriptures, we will use the right to appeal, and as a last resort we will "obey God rather than men." (*Genesis 9:5-6; Daniel 4:17; Matthew 22:15-21; John 19:10-11; Acts 4:18-20, 5:26-30; Romans 13; Titus 3:1; 1Peter 2:11-17*)

### **(19) Future Events**

While there is much discussion related to events that will take place at the end of the present church age, there are clear indications of what some of those events will be. Some of those events will take place simultaneously while others will occur as a singular event. Because of this, the events listed below are not presented in the specific sequence in which they may occur.

#### **(a) The Tribulation**

A seven-year period, distinctly divided into two three and one half-year periods, during which those left on the Earth will be subjected to great anguish and affliction due to the outpouring of God's wrath. (*Isaiah 63:1-6; Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:1-31; Revelation 6:1-17*)

#### **(b) The Rapture**

Christ will descend from heaven and at the sound of the trumpet the dead in Christ and all living believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Only God the Father knows the timing of this event. (*1Corinthians 15:50-58; 1Thessalonians 1:9-10; 4:13-5:3; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10*)

#### **(c) The Judgment Seat of Christ**

Believers' works will be evaluated, and rewards will be dispensed or lost. Neither punishment nor loss of salvation will be involved. (*Romans 14:10-13; 1Corinthians 3:11-15; 2Corinthians 5:8-11*)

#### **(d) The Second Advent of Christ**

Christ will return to the Earth in power and glory to establish His millennial kingdom. Satan will be bound; faithful Israel will be gathered and regenerated; Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be resurrected; and nations of the world will be judged. (*Zechariah 14:1-7; Matthew 24:24-31; 25:31-46; Revelation 19:11-21*)

#### **(e) The Millennium**

Christ will reign on the Earth for a thousand years. Satan will be bound and unable to influence the world. Peace, joy, justice, full knowledge of God, and prosperity will characterize Christ's rule. (*Isaiah 11; Hebrews 8:6-13; Revelation 20:1-7*)

**(f) Satan's Final Revolt**

At the end of the millennium, God will release Satan, who will then gather all rebellious people on the Earth to fight God. However, God will kill them all with fire and throw Satan into Hell, where he will stay for eternity. (*Revelation 20:1-10*)

**(g) The Great White Throne Judgment**

All unsaved souls will be brought before Christ, judged according to their works to determine the degree of their eternal punishment, and thrown into Hell to suffer forever. (*Psalms 9:16-17; Daniel 7:9-10; Acts 10:40-42; Revelation 20:11-15*)

**(h) The Destruction and Recreation of Heavens and Earth**

God will melt the elements of the Earth and surrounding heavens with intense heat, and then fashion a new Earth and new heavens. (*Isaiah 65:17-22; Matthew 24:32-36; II Peter 3:9-13; Revelation 21:1-5*)

**(i) The Eternal State of Believers**

All saved souls will live with God forever – rejoicing, serving, and praising God. (*John 14:1-3; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21, 22*)

**(20) Moral & Civil Issues**

**(a) Marriage, Gender and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as a male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. We believe 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. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. (*Genesis 1:26-27, 2:18-15, 1Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4*)

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (*Matthew 15:18-20; 1Corinthians 6:9-10*).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Willow Oak Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to our Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by our Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality (*Matthew 15:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1Thessalonians 5:22*).

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



We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. 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 Willow Oak Baptist Church. (*Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31*)

#### **(b) Divorce and Remarriage**

Because God has established marriage as an indissoluble union, and since it is an earthly copy of the relationship between God and His people, it is a covenant that is binding on both parties. However, because of the fallen human nature, the Scriptures permit divorce in the following cases as condescension to human frailty for the protection of the innocent party:

(1) Divorce for the cause of immorality - with the understanding that the obligation to maintain or reinstate the marriage may not be imposed upon the innocent spouse.

(2) Divorce for desertion – desertion being defined as behavior equivalent to the abandonment of the marriage relationship.

While God's ideal is for one marriage to last a lifetime, and most divorces are rooted in sin and failure, we hold that God forgives, restores and will bless a remarriage that is committed to honoring and serving Him. (*Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; Romans 7:1-3; 1Corinthians 7:10-16; 1Timothy 3:2 & 12; Titus 1:6*)

#### **(c) Abortion**

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the taking of an unborn human life. We believe that abortions of pregnancies due to birth defects, gender selection, population or birth control, or the mental wellbeing of the mother are unacceptable. While abortion must be considered from the Biblical perspective as a sin against God and the unborn, we also believe that God forgives and restores the offender. (*Job 3:16; Psalms 127; 139:13-16; Proverbs 17:6; Isaiah 44:24; 49:1-6; Jeremiah 1:4-6; Luke 1:41-44*)

#### **(d) Lawsuits between Believers**

We believe that Christians are constrained from bringing civil lawsuits before the unsaved world, when resolving personal disputes against other Christians or the Church. God has equipped the Church with all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may use the judicial system in criminal matters or to seek fair compensation from another Christian as long as the claim is pursued without prejudicial malice or slander. (*1Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32*)

