

Grace Christian Fellowship

STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. **THE HOLY SCRIPTURES:** We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is an essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God, the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology, must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture. Although the majority of the leadership and church uses the New International Version of the Bible, all legitimate translations of the Scriptures are acceptable and used.

2 Tim. 3:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Ps. 19:7

2. **THE ONE TRUE GOD:** The one true God has revealed Himself as the Eternal, Self-sufficient, Incomprehensible, Holy, and Sovereign God, who as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is three distinct persons yet one in substance.

Rev. 1:8; Acts 17:24-25; Isa. 55:8; 2 Chron. 20:6; Matt. 28:19

- a. **GOD THE FATHER:** God the Father is the Creator of heaven

and earth. By His word and for His glory, He freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing. Through the same Word He daily sustains all His creatures. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love Him, and in His unfathomable grace gave His Son Jesus Christ for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with Himself, and intended that all creation should live to the praise of His glory.

Luke 10:21-22; Matt. 23:9; John 3:16; 6:27; Rom. 1:7; I Tim. 1:1-2; 2:5-6; I Peter 1:3; Rev. 1:6

- b. **GOD THE SON:** Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was and is perfect in nature, teaching, and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through Him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in Him all things hold together by the power of His word. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and in Him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed His blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By His death in our place, He revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day He rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness and for a period of forty days appeared to over five hundred witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of His resurrection. He ascended into Heaven where, at God's right hand, He intercedes for His people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of His body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed

by all.

Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; John 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:21-23; John 20:30, 31; Matt. 20:28; Eph. 1:4; Acts 1:11; Rom. 5:6-8; 6:9,10; Heb. 7:25; Heb. 9:28; I Tim. 3:16

- c. GOD THE SPIRIT: The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through the proclamation of the Gospel He persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, dwells within the regenerate, and empowers the believer for faithful service. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshipped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

John 14:16,17,26; John 15:26,27; John 16:9-14; Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Gal. 5:22-26

3. THE FALL OF MAN AND HIS STATE: Man was created good and in the image of God Almighty. But mankind, through the imputation of sin acquired from the first man Adam, is now self-seeking, wicked, idolatrous, dead in spirit, and a natural enemy of God. There is nothing in man that would desire a relationship or reconciliation with God the Father.

Gen. 1:26-31; Rom. 5:12-21; Rom. 3: 10-18; Eph. 2:1; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7

4. THE WAY OF SALVATION:

- a. THE GOSPEL: Jesus Christ is the Gospel. The Good News is revealed in His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the Gospel, His resurrection is the power of the Gospel, and His ascension is the glory of the Gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our

sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases His holy wrath. It also demonstrates His mysterious love and reveals His amazing grace. Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men can be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what He has accomplished. Therefore, this Gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations. And we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches, and ministries to proceed from, and be related to the cross.

Rom. 10:9; 1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21-26; Rom. 5:9

- b. **REPENTANCE AND FAITH:** Man's response to the Gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for His own pleasure and glory. It is also true that the message of the Gospel is only effectual to those who genuinely repent of their sins and, by God's grace, put saving faith in Christ. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, he cannot become Christ's disciple. It must also be recognized that since fallen man is incapable of repenting and expressing trusting faith in his own strength, repentance and faith are gifts from God.

Luke 13:3-5; 1 Thess. 1:9; Eph. 2:8-10; Is. 55:6-7; 2Cor. 7:9-10; Matt. 11:28-30; John 3:16; Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1; 2Pet. 3:9; Eph. 5

- 5. **THE SALVATION OF MAN:** Since man is totally depraved, incapable, and not desiring to be saved, man's salvation is completely dependent on the Mercy and Grace of God through Faith and Trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord

Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift from God so no man can merit or earn his salvation through heritage, religious affiliation, or good works. This salvation is divinely imputed by the Holy Spirit, who brings spiritual life to man's dead spirit by the usual means of the preaching of the Word of God and most importantly, by God's Eternal Election and Decrees. Since this salvation is all a work of Grace, a true believer can be secure that the Lord will keep them in the faith. As a Just and Holy God, the Father has the divine right to dispense His Justice and Mercy on whomever He chooses according to His good and sovereign purposes. Salvation is by Grace alone – through faith alone – in Christ alone.

Rom. 3:10-18; Rom 8:29-30; Rom. 9:15-33; Rom. 10:10-15; Rom. 12:3; Eph.2:4-10; John 10:28; Phil.1:6

6. **SANCTIFICATION:** The Scriptures teach that a life of holiness is necessary and a sign of one's salvation. The Holy Spirit is the active agent in this sanctification and seeks to produce his fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality within man's unredeemed flesh, as we are led by the Spirit we are to "crucify the misdeeds of the flesh." We do so as we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping His commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word, and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship, and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve his people until the end, which is most certain.

Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; 1 John 2:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 6:6; 6:11-13; 8:13; Gal. 2:20

7. **EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT:** In addition to effecting regeneration

and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his spiritual gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. These fillings can begin at the point of regeneration but are often experienced as one grows in their walk with the Lord and are ultimately contingent on God's sovereign grace.

Luke 24: 49; Acts 1: 4-8; 2:1-21; 10:44-48; 1 Cor. 12 - 14

8. **THE HARMONY OF LAW AND GOSPEL:** The Law of God is nothing less than an expression of God's holy and moral character. In this sense the Law of God is eternal, just as He is eternal. Thus God's eternal law has normally been referred to as His Moral Law. Though God has given His Law in various forms throughout the stages of redemptive history, it is the Moral Law that has always been the foundation and basis of God's Law. Christ lived a perfect law-abiding life and fulfilled the requirements of God's law that we in our sinfulness and rebellion could not. It is this very law-abiding righteous that is imputed to those who trust in the redemptive work of Christ.

Though Christ fulfilled the requirements of the law on behalf of the elect, the Christian life is not without external laws. Jesus taught many moral principles and explained how his teachings were the true application of the Law (specifically the Mosaic Law). Following the example and teachings of Christ and also that of the Apostles, we too must discern the moral principles taught throughout the Scriptures and apply them carefully to the church and world of our day.

Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 115:3; Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 7:7-25; Gal. 3:23-29

9. **THE CHURCH:** The Church is the Body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of the great commission. Each believer is an integral part of the Church and should be encouraged and trained to flow in their giftings so that the Church will function in a healthy and fruitful manner. The Lord has divinely called and scripturally ordained leadership to teach, guide, correct, train, and prepare the Church for works of service.

God by his Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, He guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination; rather, the Church Universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the Gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve Him by faithfully doing His will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted throughout the entire world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the gospel. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

All members of the Church Universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has called and gifted men as pastors/teachers for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Women play a vital role in the life of the church, but in keeping with God's created design they are not permitted "to have authority over a man" (1 Tim.

2:12). Therefore, eldership within the church is male. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and leadership and the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in His service in relation to one another and to the world.

Eph.1:22-23; Eph. 2:22; Heb. 12:23; Eph. 4:11-13; Heb. 10:25

10. THE SACRAMENTS: A sacrament is a visible sign of God's promise of grace to believers. We believe that the Lord has left us with two such sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are not to be empty rituals and they do not automatically convey the things that they signify, but they have been ordained by Christ and designed to signify, instruct, and seal the believers who receive them in faith. They are a vital part of the worship of God and the nurturing of the Christian life.

a. BAPTISM: Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's redemptive work. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin. For Grace Christian Fellowship's position on infant baptism, please refer to the Positional Paper on Covenant Placement found elsewhere in this document.

Col 2:11-15; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31-34; Matt. 28:19

b. THE LORD'S SUPPER: As with water baptism, the Lord's Supper (or Communion) is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, is the sacrament expressing our covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as we remember His

suffering and death and enjoy a special presence of Christ and His Grace. It also serves the church as a reminder of His second coming. The elements are to be received with an attitude of faith and self-examination. It is to be celebrated by believers as often as possible until the day when the Lord Jesus finally celebrates His Supper with us at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

Matt. 26:17-30; Cor. 11:23-32

11. MISSIONS: We believe that God has given the church a great commission to make disciples of all nations – internationally, domestically, and locally – so that there might be a great and faithful multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic, and language group who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20

12. HEAVEN AND HELL: The Scriptures plainly teach that those who are redeemed and of the Elect will one day, either by physical death or by spiritual translation, be changed and resurrected to a completely new dimension of life and will spend eternity in the glorious presence of the Lord. This is all the result of God's Gracious Mercy towards His children through Christ. The devil, his angels, and anyone else not redeemed or whose name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the Lake of Fire (Hell, Gehenna, Second Death). This is all the result of God's Holy and Perfect Justice.

1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:2-58; Rom. 8:23; John 3:16

13. THE CONSUMMATION: The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal, and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ

are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving Him and giving Him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new.

Matt. 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 4:15; II Tim. 4:1; Tit. 2:13; I Cor. 4:5; I Cor. 15; II Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:4-6,11-15