

**Joy Community Fellowship of Williamstown**  
***An Expanded Statement on Our Core Doctrinal Convictions***  
**2019**

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## ***An Expanded Statement on Our Core Doctrinal Convictions<sup>1</sup>***

### **2019**

#### **Preface**

We believe that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has called the church, of which He is the head, to a oneness that is formed by the Word of God, characterized by biblical love, and united in the purpose of glorifying God. Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach the whole counsel of God. Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion and strengthens the church in her mission to make disciples of all nations. Additionally, we believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine and that a passion for the glory of God and the good of all peoples is produced and sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works. We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. Consequently, we do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved. However, we believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served, not by finding the lowest common denominator of doctrine, around which all can gather, but by elevating the value of truth, stating the doctrinal parameters of the church, and seeking the unity that comes from the truth. We believe that true Christian unity uniquely displays the very love that passes between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and therefore persuasively commends the power of the gospel to a watching and unbelieving world. We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and call on others to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. As conversation and debate takes place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship. May God be glorified in this local congregation and in all the earth!<sup>2</sup>

*"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

*Romans 11:36*

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<sup>1</sup> The Joy Community Fellowship of Williamstown "Expanded Statement on Our Core Doctrinal Convictions" was compiled using as sources the Joy Community Fellowship Elder Affirmation of Faith, The London Baptist Confession of Faith, The New Hampshire Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

<sup>2</sup> John 17: 20-26, Acts 17:11, Acts 20:27, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Ephesians 4:13-14, 1 Timothy 1:5, 2 Peter 1:2, Philippians 1:9-11, Ephesians 4:4-6, John 13:34-35, 17:20-23, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Peter 3:18.

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## **1. The Holy Scriptures**

1.1 We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is the infallible Word of God, verbally inspired by God, and without error in the original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; John 17:17).

1.2 God's self-revealed Word expressed in the Holy Scriptures is the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture (see verses under 1.1).

1.3 Scripture contains all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and it now contains everything we need God to tell us for his own glory, for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all, yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly presented, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned may gain a sufficient understanding of them (2 Timothy 3:15-17; I Corinthians 1:21, 2:13-14).

1.4 God's Word is revealed through the intentions of inspired human authors, even when the author's intention was to express divine meaning of which they were not fully aware. Thus, the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. Therefore, the process of discovering the intention of God in the Bible is a humble and careful effort to find in the language of Scripture what the human authors intended to communicate. The work of the Holy Spirit is essential for right understanding of the Bible, and prayer for His assistance belongs to a proper effort to understand and apply God's Word (1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 3:16; Matthew 4:6-7; 1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Psalm 119:18; Ephesians 1:18; John 6:45).

## **2. The Trinity, One God in Three Persons**

2.1 We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, fountain of all being; the Word or the Son, eternally imaging forth the radiance of the Father's glory, not made, without beginning; and the Holy Spirit, proceeding eternally from the Father and the Son. Therefore, each person of the Trinity has the whole divine essence, yet the essence is undivided, is infinite, without beginning, and executes distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Deuteronomy 6:4; Daniel 4:34-35; Psalm 138:5; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1, 14, 18; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Hebrews 1:3-6; Acts 5:3-4).

2.2 God is supremely joyful in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God (1 Timothy 1:11; John 15:11; Matthew 25:23; John 17:24; 1 John 1:3-4).

2.3 God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, is alone in and unto himself all sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory unto them. He is the fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he has sovereign dominion over all creatures to do whatsoever he pleases. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent from the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands, therefore to him is due from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience, as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them (John 5:26; Psalm 148:13; Psalm 119:68; Job 22:2-3; Romans 11:34-36; Daniel 4:25, 34-35; Hebrews 4:13; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18; Psalm 145:17; Revelation 5:12-14).

## **3. Of God's Eternal Decree and Election**

3.1 We believe that God has decreed in Himself from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably, all things which shall ever come to pass in order to display the full extent of His glory

for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him (2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:11; Isaiah 46:9-10; Isaiah 41:21-23).

3.2 God upholds and governs all things in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image (Isaiah 40:26; Colossians 1:16-17; Matthew 10:29-30; Lamentations 3:37-38; Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 1:20, 3:19).

3.3 By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace. Others are left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice. These angels and men thus predestined and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished (1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:5, 6; Romans 9:22, 23; Jude 4; 2 Timothy 2:19; John 13:18).

3.4 God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, has chosen in Christ those that are predestined to life unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other condition or motivating cause inherent to the creature (Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; Romans 8:30; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Romans 9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:5, 12).

3.5 As God has appointed only the elect unto glory, so he has, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means to that end so that they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10; Romans 8:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:26; John 17:9; John 6:64).

3.6 The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men embracing and obeying the will of God revealed in his Word may be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 1:10; Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33; Romans 11:5, 6, 20; Luke 10:20).

#### **4. God's Creation**

4.1 We believe that God created the universe, and everything in it, out of nothing, by the Word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency, God was pleased in creation to display His glory for the everlasting joy of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Genesis 1:1, 31; Hebrews 11:3; Psalm 50:9-15; Isaiah 43:7, 35:10; Colossians 1:16; Acts 17:24; Revelation 5:9).

4.2 God created a great multitude of spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies, called angels. Though often unseen, angels glorify God by carrying out God's purposes and serving God's people. We believe that demons are evil angels who once were like the good angels but who, led by Satan, rebelled against God and lost their privilege of serving God, and now continually work evil in the world. We believe that as evil and corrupt as Satan and his demons are, ultimately, limited by God's control and have limited power in the world (Hebrews 1:14; Acts 12:23; Jude 1:6; Job 1:6-12).

4.3 God directly created Adam from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race; that they were created male and female equally in the image of God, without sin; that they were created to glorify their Maker, Ruler, Provider, and Friend by trusting His all-sufficient goodness, admiring His infinite beauty, enjoying His personal fellowship, and obeying His all-wise counsel; and that, in God's love and wisdom, they were appointed differing and complementary roles in marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship to the church (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7, 21-22; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Genesis 1:31; Ephesians 5:22-33).

4.4 Marriage is an institution of God's creation and is a lifetime covenant commitment between one man and one woman for the mutual help of both husband and wife, for the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means by which to fulfill the Lord's command to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18, 24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:22-33).

## **5. The Fall of Man, Sin and His Punishment**

5.1 We believe that although God created man morally upright, he was led astray from God's Word and wisdom by the subtlety of Satan's deceit, and chose to take what was forbidden, and thus declare his independence from, distrust for, and disobedience toward his all-good and gracious Creator. Thus, our first parents, Adam and Eve, by this sin, fell from their original innocence and communion with God (Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 3:1-13; Romans 5:12).

5.2 As the head of the human race, Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, as all are conceived in sin and by nature children of wrath, therefore corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person. All persons are thus corrupt by nature, enslaved to sin, and morally unable to delight in God and overcome their own proud preference for self-rule, rather than humble, joyful submission to God's benevolent rule (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10-19; Romans 5:12-19; Ephesians 2:2-3; Romans 8:7-8).

5.3 God has subjected the creation to futility, and the entire human family is made justly liable to untold miseries of sickness, decay, calamity, and loss. Thus all the adversity and suffering in the world is an echo and a witness of the exceedingly great evil of moral depravity in the heart of mankind; and every new day of life is a God-given, merciful reprieve from imminent judgment, pointing to repentance (Romans 8:20-23; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Matthew 5:45; Romans 2:4).

5.4 Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether opposed to that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself for conversion. However, when God converts a sinner into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good. Due to man's remaining corruptions, he does not perfectly will that which is good, but continues to will that which is evil, until his will is finally and fully redeemed (Romans 5:6, 8:7; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Titus 3:3-5; John 6:44; Colossians 1:13; John 8:36; Philippians 2:13; Romans 7:15,18-19,21,23).

## **6. God's Covenant**

6.1 We believe that the distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant (Luke 17:10; Job 35:7, 8).

6.2 The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his offspring, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe (Galatians 3:10-12, 21; Romans 10:5-6; Romans 5:12-20; Genesis 2:17; Romans 8:3; Romans 3:20; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 42:6; Mark 6:15-16; John 3:16; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44-45).

6.3 This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament (2 Corinthians 3:6-9; Hebrews 8-10; Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, Hebrews 11:13, John 8:56; Galatians 3:7-14).

6.4 Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. Though they differ in their provisions, there are not two covenants of grace, but one (Colossians 2:17; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Hebrews 12:22-28; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Ephesians 2:15-19; Luke 22:20; Galatians 3:14-16, Romans 3:21-30, Psalm 32:1; Romans 4:3-24; Hebrews 13:8; Acts 15:11).

## **7. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God**

7.1 We believe that in the fullness of time, God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh, He took on a fully human nature, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion or mixture. Thus, the Person, Jesus Christ, was and forever is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man (Galatians 4:4; Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14-17; Philippians 2:6-8; 1 Timothy 2:5).

7.2 Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life. He preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history. He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation. His life was governed by His Father's providence with a view to fulfilling all Old Testament prophecies concerning the One who was to come (Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 1:27; Matthew 11:4-6, 14:19-20; John 13:19; Luke 22:31-34; John 21:18-19; Luke 24:25-27; Genesis 3:15; Psalm 110:1-7; Deuteronomy 18:18; Isaiah 53:1-12; Isaiah 9:6-7).

7.3 Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, that He died, was buried and on the third day rose from the dead to vindicate the saving work of His life and death and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory. During forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection and then ascended bodily into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding for His people on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet (John 10:18; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 4:25; Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13).

## **8. The Saving Work of Christ**

8.1 We believe that it pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his offspring and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified (Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Acts 3:22; Hebrews 5:5-6; Psalm 2:6; Luke 1:33; Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 1:2; Acts 17:31; Isaiah 53:10; John 17:6; Romans 8:30).

8.2 By His perfect obedience to God and by His suffering and death as the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins and the gift of perfect righteousness for all who trusted in God prior to the cross and all who would trust in Christ thereafter. Through living a perfect life and dying in our place as our substitute, the just for the unjust, Christ suffered our punishment, fully appeased the wrath of God against us, vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification, and completely removed the condemnation of the law against us (Romans 5:18-19, 3:24-25; John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:21, 3:13; Colossians 2:13-14).

8.3 The atonement of Christ for sin warrants and impels a universal offering of the gospel to all persons, so that to every person it may be truly said, —God gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. Whosoever will may come for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out (John 3:16; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19; Colossians 1:23; John 6:37).

8.4 The death of Christ did obtain more than the bona fide offer of the gospel for all; it also obtained the omnipotent New Covenant mercy of repentance and faith for God's elect. Christ died for all, but not for all in the same way. In His death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to His friends, His sheep, His bride. For them He obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 13:20-21; Acts 11:18; Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 17:6, 9, 19).

## **9. The Work of the Holy Spirit**

9.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation, producing faith in the remnant of God's people, performing signs and wonders, empowering the preaching of prophets and inspiring the writing of Scripture. Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He inaugurated a new era of the Spirit by pouring out the promise of the Father on His Church (Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6, 3:10; 1 Samuel 10:6; 2 Peter 1:21; Luke 24:49).

9.2 The newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ. This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to proclaim the gospel of the glory of Christ, by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe, by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory, by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts, being sovereignly free to dispense, as He wills, all the gifts for the upbuilding of the body of Christ and the confirmation of His Word, by calling all the nations into the power of the gospel of Christ, and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people for the everlasting habitation of God (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; Acts 16:14; John 3:8; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; Hebrews 2:3-4; Jeremiah 31:33-34).

9.3 Those whom God has predestined unto life, he is pleased to effectually call, by the Holy Spirit through His Word, out of that state of sin and death to grace and salvation in Jesus Christ by enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. This is not done because of any power or agency in the creature who is completely passive in the matter, but rather the Holy Spirit takes away their heart of stone, and gives unto them a heart of flesh, renews their wills, and by his almighty power causes them to desire and pursue that which is good. He effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet in such a way that they come absolutely freely, being made willing by his grace. Man is dead in sins and trespasses, until quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit; he is enabled to answer the call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead (2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25; Ephesians 1:19, 20; Romans 8:30; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; Ephesians 2:1-6; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:17, 18; Ezekiel 36:26; Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:27; Ephesians 1:19; Psalm 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4).

9.4 The Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. Therefore, neither the work of the Father in election, nor the work of the Son in atonement, nor the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a hindrance or discouragement to the proclamation of the gospel to all peoples and persons everywhere. On the contrary, this divine saving work of the Trinity is the warrant and the ground of our hope that our evangelization is not in vain in the Lord (2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Acts 16:14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:13-15).

## **10. Justification**

10.1 We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works, pardoning their sins, and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence. Faith is therefore the sole instrument by which we, as sinners, are united to Christ, whose perfect righteousness and satisfaction for sins is alone the ground of our acceptance with God. This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the instant of justification and cannot be lost or diminished in any way. Therefore, the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us (Titus 3:5-7; Romans 3:24-26, 28, 4:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 1:21-23; Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:10-14; Philippians 3:9).



10.2 Nevertheless, the faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces, by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of love and leads necessarily to sanctification and a grace empowered zeal for good works (Galatians 5:6, 22-25; 1 John 3:14; Colossians 1:4-6; James 2:17, 26; Hebrews 12:14; Romans 8:13-14).

10.3 God does continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified, and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly discipline; and in that condition they may not enjoy the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves and confess their sins in renewed faith and repentance (Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9; John 10:28; Psalm 89:31-33; Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51:1-19; Matthew 26:75).

## **11. Repentance and Saving Faith**

11.1 We believe that the grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word; by which also, and by the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, prayer, and other means appointed of God, it is increased and strengthened (2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 10:14,17; Luke 17:5; 1 Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32).

11.2 By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, for he receives it as the authority of God himself speaking. This yields obedience to the commands, trembling at the warnings, and embracing of the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace (John 1:12, 14:45; Psalm 119:10-11; Isaiah 66:2; 1 Timothy 4:8; Acts 16:31; Galatians 2:20; 2 Timothy 1:9-10).

11.3 Repentance is a sacred duty and granted by God's grace, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God in sincere contrition, confession and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior (Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8; 1 John 5:1; John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; Luke 18:13; Luke 15:18-21; James 4:7-10; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Romans 10:9-11; Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 4:14; Psalm 2:6; Hebrews 1:8; Hebrews 7:25; 2 Timothy 1:12).

11.4 Such is the provision which God has made through Christ in the covenant of grace for the preservation of believers unto salvation; that although there is no sin so small that it does not merit damnation; yet there is no sin so great that it shall bring damnation on them that repent. Therefore, repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, due to remaining corruption, so that it is every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins (Luke 19:8; 1 Timothy 1:13,15; Romans 6:23; Isaiah 1:16-18, 55:7).

## **12. Sanctification**

12.1 We believe that they who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are also further sanctified, truly and personally, through the same virtue, by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the many lusts thereof are progressively more weakened and mortified, and progressively more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5-6; John 17:17; Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23; Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 1:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14).

12.2 This sanctification is throughout the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there still abides some remnants of corruption in every part, so that a continual and irreconcilable war rises up; the flesh warring against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 7:18, 23; Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11).

12.3 In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may greatly prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part will overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, pressing after a heavenly life, in gospel obedience to all the

commands which Christ as Head and King, in His Word has prescribed them (Romans 7:23; Romans 6:14; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 7:1).

### **13. Assurance of Salvation**

13.1 We believe that, although false believers and other unregenerate men may deceive themselves of being in the favor of God and in a state of salvation and are thereby assured of their vain hope, only true believers in the Lord Jesus who love him in sincerity and endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed (Job 8:13, 14; Matthew 7:22, 23; 1 John 2:3; 1 John 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; 1 John 5:13; Romans 5:2, 5).

13.2 This certainty is not mere speculation or probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel; and also upon the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit unto which promises are made, and on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God; and, as a fruit of that testimony, keeping the heart both humble and holy (Hebrews 6:11, 17-19; 2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11; Romans 8:15, 16; 1 John 3:1-3).

13.3 This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, therefore, it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance (Isaiah 50:10; Psalm 88:1-18; Psalm 77:1-12; 1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Romans 5:1, 2, 5; Romans 14:17; Psalm 119:32; Romans 6:1,2; Titus 2:11-14).

13.4 True believers assurance of salvation may at various times be shaken, diminished, and interrupted by falling into some sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance leaving a sense of walking in darkness with no light, yet they are never deprived of God's faithful keeping through the love of Christ so that they are preserved from utter despair and by the operation of the Spirit their assurance may in due time be revived (Psalm 51:8, 12, 14; Psalm 116:11; Psalm 77:7, 8; Psalm 31:22; Psalm 30:7; 1 John 3:9; Luke 22:32; Psalm 42:5, 11; Lamentations 3:26-31).

### **14. The Law of God**

14.1 We believe that God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart, and a particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; by which he bound him and all his offspring to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience. He promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it (Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10, 12).

14.2 The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man (Romans 2:14-15; Deuteronomy 10:4).

14.3 Besides this law, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel ceremonial laws, containing several ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, and partly holding forth varied instructions of moral duties, of which all ceremonial laws being appointed only until the fullness of time at the appearing of Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only law-giver, were fulfilled and made obsolete. To them also he gave various judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution. (Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Colossians 2:14,16-17; Ephesians 2:14, 16; 1 Corinthians 9:8-10).

14.4 The law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government; that it is holy, just and good; and that the inability which the scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to sincere and joyful obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and one of the means of grace connected with the establishment

of the visible church. (Romans 3:31; Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17; Romans 3:20; Romans 4:15; Romans 7:12; Romans 7:7,14-22; Galatians 3:21; Psalm 119; Romans 8:7-8; Joshua 24:19; Jeremiah 13:23; John 6:44; John 5:44; Romans 8:2-4; Romans 10:4; I Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 8:10; Jude 20-21).

## **15. The Ordinary Means of Grace**

15.1 We believe that faith is enabled and sustained by God's Spirit primarily through the ordinary means of grace given to the Church by Christ, namely His Word, prayer, and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The good fight of faith is fought mainly by meditating on the Scriptures and praying that God would apply them to our souls (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:18-19, 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Ephesians 6:17-18; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 119:18, 36).

15.2 The promises of God recorded in the Scriptures are suited to save us from the deception of sin by displaying for us, and holding out to us, superior pleasures in the protection, provision, and presence of God. Therefore, reading, understanding, pondering, memorizing, and savoring the promises of all that God will be for us in Jesus are primary means of the Holy Spirit to break the power of sin's deceitful promises in our lives. Therefore, it is necessary that we give ourselves to such meditation day and night (2 Peter 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:34; Hebrews 11:24-26; 2 Timothy 2:7; Psalm 119:11; Psalm 34:8; Psalm 1).

15.3 God has ordained to bless and use His people for His glory through the means of prayer, offered in Jesus' name by faith. All prayer should seek ultimately that God's name be hallowed, and that His kingdom come, and that His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed (Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 7:7-11; Ephesians 6:19; James 1:5-8; Matthew 6:9-10).

15.4 Jesus has given to His Church baptism and the Lord's Supper as two specially instituted ordinances for the signifying, sealing, and strengthening of His new covenant people that they would be supplied with spiritual power to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel in this present evil age to the glory of God (Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:36-39; Matthew 28:19; Romans 2:28-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 17-20, 22; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

## **16. The Church and the Lord's Day**

16.1 We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, in every time and place, who are chosen in Christ and united to Him through faith by the Spirit in one Body, with Christ Himself as the all-supplying, all-sustaining, all-supreme, and all-authoritative Head. We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:10, 1:22-23, 4:15-16, 3:10; Matthew 5:14-16; Revelation 5:9-12).

16.2 It is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches in which believers covenant together and join in membership to hear the Word of God proclaimed, to engage in corporate worship, to practice the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love, to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline, and to engage in local and world evangelization. The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable way to steward their God-given spiritual gifts; it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells; it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world; and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds— especially to the poor—and give glory to the Father in heaven (Acts 8:1, 1 Corinthians 16:19; Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Colossians 3:15-16; Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Romans 12:6-8; Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 12:13-18; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 2:10; Matthew 5:14-16).

16.3 Each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Elders are also to function as shepherds carefully and lovingly watching over the souls in their care as one who will have to give an account. Women are not to fill the role of elder in the local church but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel. Furthermore, Christ has given to the

Church the office of deacon, whereby qualified men full of the Spirit and of wisdom are to be set apart for the physical care of the saints through the equitable distribution of the church's resources (Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 2:12-13).

16.4 The first day of the week is the Lord's Day and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for that rest that remains for the people of God (Acts 20:7; Genesis 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Exodus 20:8; Revelation 1:10; Psalm 118:15, 24; Isaiah 58:13-14, 56:2-8; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 11:26, 13:44; Leviticus 19:30; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2-3; Psalm 26:8; Psalm 87:3; Hebrews 4:3-11).

## **17. The Ordinances**

17.1 We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive command and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world (Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:26).

17.2 Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith express their union with Christ in His death and resurrection, by being immersed in water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God, the true Israel, and an emblem of burial and cleansing, signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin. Therefore, baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of membership in the local church, including participation in the Lord's Supper (Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:36-39; Matthew 28:19; Romans 2:28-29).

17.3 The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord in which gathered believers eat bread, signifying Christ's body given for His people, and drink the cup of the Lord, signifying the New Covenant in Christ's blood. We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes. Those who eat and drink in a worthy manner partake of Christ's body and blood, not physically, but spiritually, in that, by faith, they are nourished with the benefits He obtained through His death, and thus grow in grace (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 17-20, 22; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

## **18. Christian Liberty and Conscience**

18.1 We believe that the liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the rigors and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation. This liberty is also seen in their free access to God, and their ability to yield obedience unto Him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind (Galatians 3:13; Galatians 1:4; Acts 26:18; Romans 8:3, 28; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:15; Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18; Galatians 3:9, 14; John 7:38, 39; Hebrews 10:19-21).

18.2 All these freedoms were also experienced in substance by true believers under the Old Testament law, but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of a ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of (Galatians 3:13; Galatians 1:4; Acts 26:18; Romans 8:3; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Romans 8:15; Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18; Galatians 3:9, 14; John 7:38, 39; Hebrews 10:19-21).

18.3 God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any respect contrary to His Word, or not contained in it. Therefore, to believe such doctrines or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience. The requiring of an implicit faith, an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also (James 4:12; Romans 14:4; Acts 4:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:20, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:24).

18.4 They who upon pretense of Christian liberty practice any sin, or cherish any sinful lust thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction. They completely destroy the end of Christian

liberty, which is that we, being delivered out of the hands of all our enemies, might serve the Lord without dread, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives (Romans 6:1, 2; Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:18, 21).

## **19. Man's State After Death and the Resurrection**

19.1 We believe that the bodies of men after death return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise, where they are with Christ, and behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies; and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell; where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day; the Scripture acknowledges no other place besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies (Genesis 3:19; Acts 13:36; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6, 8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23; Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 16:23, 24).

19.2 At the last day, the saints that are found alive, shall not sleep, but be changed; and all the dead shall be raised up bodily, although with different qualities and shall be united again to their souls forever (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Job 19:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 15:42, 43).

19.3 The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honor, and be made conformable to his own glorious body (Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Philippians 3:21).

## **20. The Coming of the Lord and the Final State**

20.1 We believe in the blessed hope, that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally, visibly, physically, and suddenly in power and great glory; and that He will gather His elect, raise the dead, free the natural creation from its bondage to corruption, judge the nations, banish Satan eternally, unite heaven and earth, and establish His eternal kingdom. We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master, and those who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery (Titus 2:13; Acts 1:9-11; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 24:39-43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Luke 21:27; Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Romans 8:19-25; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:22-28; Matthew 25:46, 41; Daniel 12:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 14:11).

20.2 God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ; to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father; in which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil (Acts 17:31; John 5:22,27; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10,12; Matthew 25:32-46).

20.3 The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient; for then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards, in the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast aside into everlasting torments, and punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (Romans 9:22-23; Matthew 25:21,34; 2 Timothy 4:8; Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

20.4 The end of all things in this age will be the beginning of a never-ending, ever-increasing happiness in the hearts of the redeemed in the new heavens and new earth, the home of righteousness. All sin will be purged, and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all, as He displays more and more of His infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the eternal joy of His people (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-22:21; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 2:6-7; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Psalm 16:11).