



FELLOWSHIP
OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Articles of Faith & Practice

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ARTICLE I - THE SCRIPTURES

We believe the original texts of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which the Church historically accepted as the Holy Scriptures, are God-breathed. These Scriptures are truth, written by holy men who were chosen and equipped by God for this special task.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21

The primary content of the revelation is truth about God himself, about his acts in history, about man in his sinful condition, and about the relationship that can be established and maintained between God and man through the person and work of Jesus Christ who completed God's plan of salvation.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalms 119:105

...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

2 Timothy 3:15

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me!"

John 14:6

We believe the Scriptures, errorless in the original documents, are divine authority in all matters which they address. Their truthfulness is not negated by the occurrences of such things as irregularities of grammar or spelling, intended and conventional generalizations or approximations, various literary devices, observational descriptions of nature, or reports of false statements made by evil persons. Since God the Holy Spirit is the source of the message as well as the mover and supervisor of those who recorded it, the Bible is reliable in what it communicates and is the supreme authority for faith and practice. Nothing may be taken from it and nothing may be added.

I warn everyone who hears the words of prophecy of this book. If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

ARTICLE II - GOD

We believe in the one and only true God who is spirit. He is self-existent, infinite, personal, unchangeable, and eternal in his being. He is perfect in holiness, righteousness, love, justice, goodness, wisdom and truth. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is the creator and sustainer of all things both visible and invisible. He is both immanent in and transcendent to the creation. The one triune God exists and reveals himself as three persons, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge that all we know about God is by revelation. Now we know only in part, but we look for the day when we will know as we are known.

A. God the Father

1. His nature

We believe in God as our Father. In his nature and in his relationships, we understand him best as Father. While a human father imperfectly loves and cares, the heavenly Father perfectly loves and cares. He is good in all he does and in everything he gives, including his discipline.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

2 Corinthians 1:3

...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. For to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it

Ephesians 4:6-7

Also see: Matthew 7:11; Hebrews 12:7-11

2. His unity with Christ

The Son came into the world to make the Father known. Jesus affirmed that he and the Father are one.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

John 14:6-7

3. His relationship to believers

The Father loved the world enough to send the Son, Jesus Christ, as the Savior of the world. Anyone who knows the Father also knows the Son. Through a

personal relationship with Christ, we come to know God as our Father and can say, "Abba, Father."

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,...

Galatians 3:26

B. God the Son (Jesus Christ)

1. His nature

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was made in the likeness of men. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, thus blending organically and permanently his divine nature with human nature in one, unique person without a third nature being formed.

The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory the glory of the one and only Son, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth

John 1:14

...being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man,...

Philippians 2:7c-8a

Also see: Matthew 1;18-25; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14a

2. His mission

The purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God and to redeem man. This redemption was accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,...

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect

1 Peter 1:18-19

Also see: 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 2:2

3. His glorification and continuing ministry

He ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God interceding for us.

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.

Luke 24:51

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,...

Hebrews 8:1

Also see: Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; 1 John 2:1; 1 Peter 3:22

4. His position in the Church

He is the head of the Church which is his body.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Colossians 1:18

5. His lordship

He has an exalted position. Ultimately every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

C. God the Holy Spirit

1. His nature

We believe the Holy Spirit is God, eternal in existence.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit...? You have not lied to men but to God."

Acts 5:3, 4

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 9:14

2. His ministry

His ministry, since his coming on the day of Pentecost, is broad and varied. At some time, every person in the world is touched by his work.

a. His work for unbelievers

- 1) He convicts and convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment.

2) He restrains the progress of evil until God's purposes are accomplished.

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father; where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

John 16:8-11

Also see: 2 Thessalonians 2:7

b. His work in salvation

1) He regenerates, giving new life to those who repent of their sins and exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

John 3:5-8

2) He comes to live in all believers at the moment of their regeneration.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;...

1 Corinthians 6:19

Also see: Romans 8:9

3) He baptizes all believers into the body of Christ.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1 Corinthians 12:13

c. His work in believers

1) He instructs, comforts, helps and guides all believers.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:13

In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Romans 8:26

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither seeks him nor knows

him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:16-18, 26

2) He sanctifies and produces Christ-like qualities in believers as they yield to his control.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:16, 22-23

3) He equips and empowers all believers for witness and service.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Also see: Matthew 28:19-20

4) He will graciously and ultimately give immortality to our resurrected bodies.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Romans 8:11

d. His work in the Church

1) He indwells the Church.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16

2) He produces unity in the Church.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called--one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6

3) He enables believers to love each other.

All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

John 13:35

Also see: 1 Corinthians 13

- 4) He equips the Church for ministry by giving spiritual gifts to each believer.

Spiritual gifts are special endowments or abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each believer, enabling the believer to participate actively in the church's ministry.

Properly exercised, every gift brings honor to Jesus Christ, produces unity, develops spiritual maturity within the body, and helps to complete the mission of the Church.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16

Also see Part II, Article V, E

ARTICLE III - MAN

A. His creation

We believe that man was created by an immediate act of God.

And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:7

He was created in the image and likeness of God. He was without sin, enjoyed fellowship with God and was capable of full obedience to his will.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:27

He was created in order that he might glorify God and enjoy him forever. In so doing, man finds his greatest measure of blessedness and true enjoyment.

...He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:5-6

Also see: Ephesians 1:18

B. His fall

We believe that man was confronted with a moral choice in the garden.

And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Genesis 2:15-17

By voluntarily transgressing God's command and yielding to the enticement of Satan, man lost his original condition, became physically, morally, intellectually and spiritually depraved and was alienated from God.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

Romans 5:12, 18

Also see: Genesis 3:1-6

In consequence of this act of disobedience, the entire human race became guilty before God with the result that each one of us possesses a sin nature. Both our sin nature and our acts of sin make us deserving of the righteous judgment of God.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Romans 3:10-12

Also see: Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:19-32; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 John 1:8-10

Therefore all men are sinners and guilty before God, are dead in their sins, and unable to save themselves.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23

Also see: Ephesians 2:1

C. His eternal destiny

We believe that there are two eternal, conscious destinies for man; heaven for the righteous and hell for the unrighteous.

Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

John 5:28-29

Also see: Psalm 9:17; John 14:1-3

After the great White Throne Judgment, and after all the enemies of God are consigned to their place of eternal punishment, the present order of things will be dissolved, and the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, shall be revealed as the eternal abiding place in which the righteous shall dwell.

Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Isaiah 65:17

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 3:13

Also see: Revelation 21:1-22:7

ARTICLE IV - SALVATION

We believe that God must and will punish sin because he is holy and cannot tolerate it. This punishment must come either to the guilty person or to a satisfactory substitute. Because it is not God's will that any should perish, he has provided the way of salvation. Jesus Christ voluntarily offered himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin so that all who believe in him may be redeemed. Initially salvation requires repentance and faith which results in justification, regeneration and sanctification and culminates in resurrection and glorification. Some of these are at times simultaneous in man's experience but are hereafter described separately for the sake of clarity.

A. Repentance

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance must accompany regeneration as well as be an ongoing act that accompanies sanctification.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Isaiah 55:7

"The time has come," he said, "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:15

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

Genuine repentance is a necessary attitude of man as a condition for a holy and just God to forgive man's sins. It is produced in man by the kindness of God. It involves godly sorrow for sin and a proper reverence for God's holiness. It results in

confessing and forsaking sin and whenever possible and appropriate, making restitution to those sinned against.

I tell you no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Luke 13:3

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Romans 2:4

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them find mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

B. Faith

We believe that faith is essential to salvation. It is the means by which the Word of God is received as true. It is both the gift of God and the response of man.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Faith is confidence based upon good evidence. It is an assurance born of complete trust in God as revealed through Christ. By faith one trusts in the death of Christ as the only efficacious sacrifice for his sin.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name

John 20:31

Also see: Romans 10:10

C. Justification

We believe that justification is a judicial act of God in which he declares the sinner free from condemnation and punishment and restores him to divine favor and privilege. It takes place when the sinner repents and trusts Christ for salvation.

...and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:24-26

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,...

D. Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is wholly of grace and free to all but must include repentance toward God and faith in Christ as Savior.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Regeneration is the impartation of divine life. By the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word, the believer is given a disposition to love and obey God. What was destroyed in Adam is renewed in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Also see: Romans 5:17; Titus 3:4-6

Other terms used in Scripture to describe regeneration are "born again," "converted" and "saved."

See John 3:7; Acts 4:12

Some evidences of regeneration are: the witness of the Holy Spirit, a personal knowledge of the forgiveness of sin, peace with God, love for God's Word, newness of life, and reconciliation with any against whom sin has been committed.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Romans 8:16

E. Sanctification

God has always required that his people should be holy because he is holy.

See Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16

Sanctification is that action whereby God sets apart his people from sin. It has its source in what Christ has done through his blood, making believers a people of his own possession and calling them holy ones (saints). This holy position is granted when the Christian first believes in Christ. It is neither earned nor achieved by good works but is followed by good works.

See 1 Corinthians 1:2,30, 6:9-11; Hebrews 10:14, 13:12

Sanctification is also a process in the Christian life and involves the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, setting one apart from a sinful walk and producing a Christ-like character. This process is experienced through faith and

obedience which includes consciously yielding the whole life to God and continually letting the Holy Spirit be in control. The results include a manifestation of spiritual fruit and progress in Christian growth, which are the will of God for every Christian.

See John 17:17; Romans 6:13b, 8:29,12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 1:2

The process of sanctification will be completed upon entering the presence of Christ when the Christian will enjoy a perfectly holy state.

See 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 3:2

F. Believer's assurance

We believe that every Christian can have a valid sense of assurance concerning his salvation, his relationship with God and his destiny. Through faith in Jesus Christ, a knowledge of the Scriptures and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, such assurance becomes real and personal.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:13

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Romans 8:16

Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us.

1 John 3:24

There is no need for any believer to be anxious about God's ability or his gracious purpose to keep the believer for himself.

See Romans 8:37-39

However, the Scriptures have ample warning for anyone who might be inclined to presume upon the love of God by careless or sinful living.

See Hebrews 3:12-13, 10:26-31

Therefore, it is necessary to examine ourselves to see whether our faith is genuine, a faith that is expressed in attitude and actions by obedient works. Without that kind of faith, there is no Scriptural assurance. The most complete basis for the believer's assurance is found in 1 John.

See 2 Corinthians 13:5

G. Resurrection and glorification

We believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, and because he lives, we too shall live.

He is not here, he has risen!

Luke 24:6a

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

2 Corinthians 15:22

Also see: 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-21

At the return of Christ, the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised and will, with the living believers, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We will be changed so as to have immortal bodies like unto Christ's own glorious body.

...the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17a

Also see: 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:20-31

Our glorification is the culminating act of God's redeeming and sanctifying believers and will be realized when we see him as he is.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

1 John 3:2

ARTICLE V - THE CHURCH

A. The nature of the Church

We believe the Church, in its universal context as the body of Christ, is composed of all believers regardless of name, race, nation or generation.

The local church, as a part of that body, is composed of a group of believers in Christ who have voluntarily joined together and are devoted to one another in love, so that the church can fulfill its purpose and mission.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:13, 27

Also see: Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19-22; Colossians 1:18-20; Revelation 5:9

B. The purpose of the Church

The purpose of the Church is to glorify God. The Church glorifies God through worship and faithful participation in its God-given mission.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5-6

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:11-14

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

Also see: 1 Chronicles 16:24; Psalm 34:3, 96:8; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 4:13-15; Galatians 1:4-5; Ephesians 3:20-21; Philippians 1:9-11, 4:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 1:25; Revelation 1:6, 19:7

C. The mission of the Church

The mission of the Church is to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

Central to this mission is the proclamation of the Word of God for the equipping of each believer to become an effective witness so that the Church will grow to the glory of God.

The local church seeks to accomplish its mission by gathering together to participate in worship, instruction, fellowship and service, so that each believer will grow into the full measure of the stature of Christ and, in obedience to him, will reach out in witness to unbelievers. As the Church makes disciples, it becomes a force for restraining evil and producing righteousness in the world.

To help accomplish this mission worldwide, local churches may unite as a denomination. The denomination may cooperate with inter-denominational groups of like faith and convictions.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved

Acts 2:42-47

Also see: Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-23; Acts 8:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:9

D. The role of the pastor

The pastor is called by God to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through leading the congregation to achieve its purpose and mission.

This leadership is best expressed as the pastor lovingly leads, feeds, equips and protects the flock under his care.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-13

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.

2 Timothy 4:2

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;...

1 Peter 5:2

Also see: John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 4:3-5; 1 Peter 5:1, 3-4

E. The role of the people

1. Leadership

Within each congregation God calls some believers to serve Jesus Christ through positions of leadership in the church's ministry.

This leadership is for the purpose of working with the pastor so that the church may achieve its purpose and mission.

Such leadership is best expressed as these persons function as models, shepherds and servants for the congregation.

But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

1 Corinthians 12:18

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

1 Timothy 3:1

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Also see: Acts 6:2-4; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Timothy 3:2-13, 4:16, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:24

2. Congregation

God calls every believer to serve Jesus Christ through active participation in the church's ministry.

Such participation is best expressed as each believer:

- Consistently grows in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,
- respectfully submits to the leadership in the congregation,
- recognizes and joyfully uses spiritual gifts for ministry for the common good,
- obediently reaches out in witness to unbelievers.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:7

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.

Hebrews 13:17-18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

2 Peter 3:18

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:2-6, 5:15-21, 6:10-18; Colossians 2:6-7, 4:2-6; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9-12, 3:15-16, 4:10-11; 1 John 1:3-4, 3; Jude 20-21

F. The gifts for the Church

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the universal spiritual experience of all true Christians, not a post-conversion experience that is evidenced by what some refer to as sign gifts. At the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit places the new believer into the universal church. The believer now has the capacity to be under the Spirit's empowerment for character transformation and ministry.

Spiritual gifts are special endowments or abilities given by the Holy Spirit to each believer, as He determines, enabling the believer to participate effectively in the church's ministry. Properly exercised and received by the body, every gift brings honor to Jesus Christ, produces unity, develops spiritual maturity within the body, and helps to complete the mission of the Church.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

(1 Peter 4:10)

We believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit spoken of in the New Testament were distributed to all believers for the common good (I Corinthians 12:7). Concerning the "sign gifts" (e.g., tongues, interpretation of tongues, revelatory prophecy, gifts of healing) we discourage any inference that these gifts indicate special spiritual attainment and/or superiority. We believe the practice of spiritual gifts is to "be done in a fitting and orderly way." (I Corinthians 14:40)

We believe the "sign gifts" accounts as recorded in Acts are descriptive of the events that occurred at the birth of the Christian Church. We do not regard the practice of "sign gifts" in any of our ministry gatherings (such as public worship or small groups) as necessary for the local church or the individual believer. Nor do we believe that the public exercise of these gifts must occur for the spiritual growth of the individual or the numerical growth of the church.

Also see: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:11.

G. The ordinances of the Church

We believe that an ordinance is an outward ceremony symbolic of a spiritual truth or experience which was instituted by Christ for perpetual use by the Church. It is not a means of salvation but becomes a source of spiritual inspiration and strength as one is obedient to the Lord's command. We believe that the Christian ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism

We believe water baptism symbolizes the experience of regeneration and union with Jesus Christ.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,...

Matthew 28:19

It is a public confession of the believer's identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Colossians 2:12

Baptism is to be administered to believers only, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We encourage immersion because this form of baptism clearly symbolizes its spiritual significance. However, other modes are recognized. Water baptism does not save or cleanse from sin. It is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Because of the scriptural instruction to baptize those who believe, because of the scriptural example that those who believed were baptized, and because of the clear meaning of baptism as indicated above, we recognize only baptism administered after a person has confessed faith in Jesus Christ, and we expect that all believers will be baptized.

Also see: Acts 8:36-38, 16:30-34

2. The Lord's Supper

We believe the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ on the night of his betrayal and is to be observed by his Church until he returns.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 26:26-30

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26

Also see: Luke 22:19

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ's death, an expression of fellowship with God and with other believers, a testimony to saving faith, a

visible seal of Christ's redemptive covenant, and the assurance of his promised return.

The Lord's Supper consists of partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, symbolizes the broken body and shed blood of Christ for the remission of our sins and reaffirms our continuing dependence upon him. Its observance is to be preceded by honest self-examination.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Corinthians 11:27-29

The communion table shall be open to all believers who know themselves to be in right relationship to God.

ARTICLE VI - THE FINAL THINGS

A. The second coming of Christ

We believe in the personal, visible and glorious return of Christ.

"...This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:11b

"...I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

John 14:2b-3

Also see: Mark 13:22-27

Historically, we have held that this will be accomplished when Christ descends from heaven to claim His waiting bride, which is the living Church, as well as departed believers. Subsequently, Christ will descend with His saints to establish the promised eternal kingdom, inaugurated by the millennial kingdom during which Christ will reign upon the earth for one thousand years.

However, in the spirit of unity and charity, we allow for differing biblical views of the millennium as well as of the timing of the end times events.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

B. The judgments

We believe the believer's works will be judged for rewards at the judgment seat of Christ at the time of his coming, the believer's sins having been judged in Christ upon the cross.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life.

John 5:24

...For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Romans 14:10c, 12

Also see: 1 Corinthians 3:8-15, 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:8

The unbeliever will appear before God for judgment at the great white throne after the millennial reign of Christ and will then be consigned to the lake of fire to suffer torment forever and ever with the devil and his angels.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden things, whether it is good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...

Hebrews 9:27

Also see: Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 20:10-15

ARTICLES OF PRACTICE

ARTICLE I - THE LORD'S DAY

We believe one day of the week was divinely set aside for rest and worship. The Jewish Sabbath (the seventh day) was obligatory upon those who lived under the Jewish law. (Genesis 2:2b-3; Exodus 20:8)

In commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the Church has set aside the first day of the week as a special day to honor her Lord in the celebration of worship, the joy of fellowship, and the love of service. (Acts 20:7a; Romans 14:6a)

Rest is experienced through spiritual exercises as well as through physical relaxation and recreative activities. Although rest should be viewed in contrast to one's daily routine, works of mercy and necessity should not be left undone. Discretion is to be exercised in the context of love rather than legalism. (Mark 2:27-28)

ARTICLE II - CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

We believe God's ownership of all things by creation and by redemption is clearly indicated in the Scriptures. Since we are saved by grace and the death of Christ provided our ransom, our whole being--spirit, soul, and body--should be freely given to God, which is our reasonable service. Our stewardship responsibility thus extends to our time, talents, and temporal goods. (Psalm 24:1; Haggai 2:8; 1 Corinthians 6:20)

We believe that giving of our temporal possessions is an act of worship out of a motive of love for Jesus Christ.

The believer is to give systematically, proportionately, cheerfully, prayerfully, and liberally. (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:8-10, 9:6-8)

Before the Mosaic law, tithing was voluntarily practiced by Abraham (Genesis 14:20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:22). The law in the Old Testament teaches the system of tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:10-12). The New Testament emphasizes systematic, generous, and gracious giving (2 Corinthians 8-9). As an expression of grace, believers are encouraged to follow the principle that the tithe of personal income is a minimum expression of their stewardship, with offerings beyond the tithe an expression of their generosity.

ARTICLE III - DEDICATION OF CHILDREN

We believe the Scriptures teach that children are of great value and God has a special concern for their well-being. Indeed, Jesus indicated their significance by tenderly taking them into his arms. The Scriptures relate instances where children were publicly dedicated. Therefore, we encourage Christian parents to dedicate their children to the Lord publicly in prayer. (1 Samuel 1:24-28; Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:16; Luke 2:21-24)

ARTICLE IV - THE HOME

A. The marriage relationship

We believe marriage is a sacred institution ordained of God as a permanent and totally intimate relationship between one man and one woman. It is intended to endure until it is broken by the death of one of the partners (Matthew 19:5-6). We believe the Scriptures do not give liberty for a believer to marry a non-believer (2 Corinthians 6:14).

We believe divorce is a basic violation of God's original intention for marriage. (Matthew 19:3-9). Divorce is nowhere encouraged in the Scriptures. Because reconciliation is central and basic to Christianity, it should be pursued with zeal as opposed to divorce. Due to the hardness of the human heart, reconciliation may not always be possible. There are two clear cases in Scripture where divorce, though not encouraged, is permitted:

- When one of the partners in marriage has committed adultery (Matthew 5:32, 19:9).
- When a non-believing partner chooses to desert a believer even though the believing partner has been seeking to reflect the Spirit of Christ in their relationship (1 Corinthians 7:15).

A person who obtained a divorce deemed biblically legitimate may enter another marriage relationship. However, in seeking to avoid any possible offense to the former partner or to anyone else, it would be acting in love to delay entering into another marriage relationship until the former partner dies or remarries. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Romans 14:14, 20-21; Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:15)

B. Family relationships

We believe God instituted the family for a husband and wife to share mutual love, concerns, joys, ideals, ambitions, and responsibilities. The practical patterns for experiencing a God-honoring family may vary, but the underlying principles are constant and clearly defined. (Ephesians 5:21-23, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-19)

The family is also the institution designed for procreation and basic nurture of children. Christian parents should train and teach their children by such means as

living godly, exemplary lives; praying for them; leading them in family worship; instructing them in the Scriptures; and disciplining them in a manner pleasing to the Lord (Genesis 1:27-28; Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

Children are to obey their parents while under their care and are always to maintain a spirit of love, honor, and respect (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20).

ARTICLE V - CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

We believe the Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ in faith and obedience, which results in being transformed into Christ's likeness with ever-increasing glory. This transformation is demonstrated through loving mutual submission and maintaining the unity of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). The Christian seeks to grow in his faith and obedience in order:

- To develop a deeper love-relationship with God. (Matthew 22:37-40)
- To be more useful for God.

This process of growing in Christ is progressive and life-long. God commands the Christian to grow and provides the power to do so through the presence of his Holy Spirit. Some tools God provides for the Christian to grow are his Word (1 Peter 2:2), prayer (Matthew 26:41), the local body of believers (Hebrews 10:24-25), and trials. (James 1:2-4)

The Christian is commanded to put Christ first in every area of their life. The cost of being a disciple is everything. (Matthew 10:37-39, 16:24; Luke 14:25-35) A person must count this cost at one's conversion to Christ. A person is not permitted to come to Christ with other gods in tow. (Matthew 19:16-24) As one grows in Christ, the Holy Spirit will open their eyes to areas of their life that are not in submission to Christ. The Christian is then commanded to bring that area into submission and obey the Master. A Christian is required to exercise a faithful stewardship of time, possessions, and abilities. All belongs to God and should be dedicated to God.

The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should not be defiled or abused in any way. Therefore, the Christian will seek to maintain attitudes and actions which are not harmful to them or others and which bring honor to Jesus Christ and his Church. (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20, 10:31)

As Christians submit to Christ, they will increasingly experience the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23a) This fruit will be evident to others and equip one to be useful for Christ in the church and useful for Christ in sharing the gospel with the lost.

The Christian is to maintain a distinctive lifestyle that reflects the Savior in order to draw non-Christians to the Savior. (Matthew 5:13-14) Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. (John 17:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5: 10) They are to be in the world to lead others to the Savior. A Christian is not to behave immorally like a

non-Christian or be conformed to the pattern of the world. (Romans 6:12-13, 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24) The Christian should be willing to identify openly with Jesus Christ and, when necessary, stand alone for what is right. Therefore, relationships which involve practices that conflict with one's allegiance to Jesus Christ, with the truth of the gospel or with the spirit of its expression should be avoided. (Matthew 25:14-30; 2 Corinthians 6: 14-7:2, 8-9)

ARTICLE VI - ATTITUDE TOWARD CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe God instituted and established civil government to direct justly the interaction of society by maintaining good laws, commending those who do right and punishing those who do wrong. Its function is to be carried out by people of integrity, justice and moral courage. (Romans 13:1; Exodus 18:21-23; Romans 13:2-10)

Though our primary allegiance is to Jesus Christ, it is our duty to pray for those in government; to respect those in authority; to proclaim truth; to demonstrate love and justice; to witness against corruption, discrimination and dishonesty; to pay taxes and to obey all laws that do not conflict with the principles of God's Word. (Matthew 22:17-21; Acts 5:29; Romans 14:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

ARTICLE VII - ATTITUDE TOWARD STRIFE AND MILITARY SERVICE

We believe the teaching of Scripture enjoins believers to love their enemies, to pray for their persecutors and to overcome evil with good. They are instructed to make every effort to live peaceably with everyone. (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:18, 12:21)

We do not believe it is God's will to promote strife among individuals, groups, classes, or nations. Because of this principle and in the light of the historic position of the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches opposing the bearing of arms in military service and law enforcement, we uphold our Christian youth who, because of their faith and conscience, choose to express the law of love uniformly in personal, social and civil relationships and to seek exemptions from or alternatives to combat service. (Romans 12:20)

We also respect the right of individual conviction and recognize that various positions will be taken on military service and law enforcement. Therefore, we support those who choose to serve in agencies of civil government, such as the military or a police force, because civil government is recognized as God's servant. (Roman 13:4)

In any event, our churches should give instruction, spiritual aid and encouragement so that our youth may make prayerful, honest decisions and may exert a positive testimony for Jesus Christ in whatever area of service chosen.

ARTICLE VIII - THE CHRISTIAN'S SPEECH

We believe the Scriptures teach that it is a sin to use the name of the Lord irreverently or to speak of sacred things in a blasphemous, frivolous or light manner. The Christian's speech should be above reproach at all times. (Exodus 20:7; Ephesians 4:29)

We respect the right of our members to affirm the truth in place of swearing a judicial oath. (Matthew 5:33-35, 37; James 5:12) Christians are obligated to speak the truth whether in legal matters or in the normal course of life. (Exodus 20:16; Psalm 15:2; Ephesians 4:16)

ARTICLE IX - ILLNESS AND HEALING

We believe all sickness is fundamentally the result of man's sin from which the condition of spiritual death was immediately incurred and from which the course toward physical death was set into motion through aging, sickness and suffering. (Genesis 2:17, 3:17, 19, 5:5; Revelation 9:27)

The work of Jesus Christ provides for the eventual and complete redemption of the body through resurrection. (1 Corinthians 12:21-23, 15:44; Philippians 3:20-21; Romans 8: 22-23)

Until the complete redemption of our bodies, we believe that God may work through human instrumentality or directly and without human means to alleviate human suffering. Therefore, we believe that we may accept and appropriate human medical knowledge or aid as a token of divine mercy and blessing. We also believe prayer may be made for the sick in accordance with Scriptural instructions. By whatever means and whenever God chooses to heal, it is always for his glory. (John 9:1-7; James 5:14-16)

We also recognize there are times when the Lord in his wisdom and for his sovereign purpose chooses not to heal one who has an ailment. While we may not always understand the Lord's will, sickness may be permitted for such diverse reasons as proving our faith, developing righteous qualities or bringing about the termination of earthly life which enables us to enter into the Lord's presence. (Psalm 119:67; Acts 9:37, 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8, 12:7-10, Hebrews 12:5-7, James 1:2)



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