

Teaching Statement of Faith Redeemer Community Church

adapted from

**Christ Community Church
and
Bethlehem Baptist Church**

Purpose of this Document

We believe that all doctrine is important but that not all doctrines are of equal weight. To be a member of this church, one must believe the core Christian doctrines that are stated in our Affirmation of Faith. We believe those truths are central to the Christian faith. At the same time, while those truths are essential, they are not a comprehensive list of important doctrine. As such, we have created this Teaching Statement which expresses in far more detail the doctrine which this church believes. Not every member agrees with every point of doctrine listed herein, but this is the doctrine that is formally taught in the church. Thus elders, deacons, and teachers of the church are expected to teach consistently with the doctrine outlined in these pages. While we do believe these things to be true and consistent with Scripture and the historic doctrines of the church, we acknowledge that there are certainly shortcomings within this document. Should we become aware of anything which is incorrect, or which speaks more confidently than Scripture, we would change the document accordingly. Thus our Teaching Statement should be viewed as a positive guide to our doctrine but not as equal nor in any way equivalent to the authority of Scripture itself.

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1. Scripture, the Word of God Written

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,¹ and without error² in the original manuscripts.

1: 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Peter 3:16, 1 Corinthians 14:37, 1 Corinthians 2:13, Matthew 22:43-44, John 14:26, John 16:13-14. 2: Proverbs 30:5, Numbers 23:19, Psalm 12:6, Hebrews 6:18, Matthew 24:35, Titus 1:2, John 17:17, Matthew 22:29.

1.2 We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are 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.³

3: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 17:17.

1.3 We believe that the meaning of Biblical texts is a fixed historical reality, rooted in the historical, unchangeable intentions of its divine and human authors. It is not legitimate to infer a meaning from a Biblical text that is not demonstrably carried by the words which God inspired. While meaning does not change, there are varied applications appropriate in various situations.⁴

4: See notes 1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.

2. The Trinity, One God as Three Persons

2.1 We believe there is one living and true God.⁵ He is the creator,⁶ sustainer,⁷ and ruler of all things.⁸ God is infinitely holy and perfect.⁹ In the eternal unity of the Godhead¹⁰ there are three persons,¹¹ the Father,¹² the Son,¹³ and the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

5: Genesis 1:1, Exodus 3:13-15, Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5-7, Isaiah 46:9, Jeremiah 10:10, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, 1 Timothy 1:17. 6: Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16-17, Romans 1:19-20, Psalm 19:1-3. 7: Psalm 104:27-30, Genesis 50:20, Matthew 6:25-34, Isaiah 40:26, Colossians 1:17. 8: 1 Chronicles 29:10-13, Psalm 47:8, Daniel 4:25, Daniel 4:34-35, Job 42:2, Psalm 33:10-11, Psalm 115:3, Proverbs 16:9, Proverbs 16:33, Proverbs 19:21, Proverbs 21:1, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:37-38, Ephesians 1:11, James 4:15, Romans 8:28, Mark 4:39-41. 9: Exodus 15:11, Leviticus 20:26, Deuteronomy 32:4, 1 Samuel 2:2, Psalm 18:30, Psalm 19:7, Isaiah 5:16, Isaiah 6:1-5, Isaiah 43:15, Matthew 5:48, 1 John 1:5. 10: Psalm 102:25-27, James 1:17, Psalm 90:2. 11: Mark 1:10-11, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:6-8, Acts 2:32-33, 2 Corinthians 13:14. 12: Isaiah 64:8, Matthew 6:9, Luke 10:21-22. 13: Matthew 1:23, John 1:1-3, John 5:17-18, John 10:30, John 14:6-11, Revelation 22:13, John 20:28-29, Romans 9:5, Colossians 1:15-16, Colossians 2:9, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:8, 2 Peter 1:1. 14: Romans 8:27, John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 12:11, Acts 5:3-4, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11, Ephesians 4:30.

2.2 We believe that 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.¹⁵

15: Matthew 25:23, John 15:11, John 17:26, Matthew 12:18.

3. God's Eternal Purpose and Election

3.1 We believe that God, from all eternity,¹⁶ in order to display the full extent of His glory,¹⁷ by the most wise and holy counsel of His will,¹⁸ according to the purposes of His grace,¹⁹ did

freely and unchangeably²⁰ ordain²¹ and foreknow²² whatever comes to pass.

16: 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 3:11, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 13:8. **17:** Romans 11:36; see also Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14, Isaiah 60:21; see also 43:7, John 12:27-28, John 17:1, John 17:4, Philippians 2:9-11. **18:** Ephesians 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:9. **19:** Ephesians 1:11-12, 2 Timothy 1:9. **20:** Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29. **21:** Isaiah 46:9-10, Proverbs 16:33, Proverbs 19:21. **22:** Isaiah 41:21-23, Isaiah 42:8-9; see also Genesis 15:13; 40:13,19; Exodus 3:19; Deuteronomy 31:16; Psalm 34:20; Isaiah 44:6-8; 44:24-28; 45:11; 45:20-21; 46:8-11; 48:1-6; Zechariah 12:10; John 6:64; 19:36-37.

3.2 We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies²³ to subatomic particles,²⁴ from the forces of nature²⁵ to the movements of nations,²⁶ and from the public plans of politicians²⁷ to the secret acts of solitary persons²⁸ – in accord with His eternal, all-wise²⁹ purposes to glorify Himself. God ordains and governs all things in such a way that He is not the author of evil nor ever condemns a person unjustly,³⁰ and every person is still wholly responsible and morally accountable for his own sins.³¹

23: Job 9:7, Isaiah 40:26. **24:** Matthew 10:29-30, Colossians 1:16-17. **25:** Job 37:6-13, Psalm 147:15-18, Mark 4:39-41. **26:** Psalm 33:10-11, Amos 3:6, Lamentations 3:37-38, Genesis 50:20. **27:** Proverbs 21:1, Proverbs 16:33. **28:** Proverbs 20:24, Proverbs 16:9. **29:** Psalm 104:24, Romans 16:27, 1 Corinthians 1:21. **30:** Deuteronomy 32:4, 1 John 1:5, James 1:13, Romans 3:4, Romans 1:20, Romans 2:11-12, Daniel 4:37. **31:** Romans 3:19, Romans 1:20, Romans 2:11-12.

3.3 We believe that God's election is an unconditional³² act of free grace³³ which was given through His Son Christ Jesus before the world began.³⁴ By this act God chose, before the foundation of the world, those who would be delivered from bondage to sin³⁵ and brought to repentance³⁶ and saving faith³⁷ in His Son Christ Jesus, leaving the balance of sinners to the just consequences of their sins.³⁸

32: Romans 9:11-18, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, John 10:25-29, John 17:6, John 6:37-39, Romans 8:28-30. **33:** Romans 11:5-8, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 2:8-9. **34:** 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4. **35:** Romans 6:17, Romans 8:2, Romans 8:28-30. **36:** 2 Timothy 2:24-25, Acts 11:18. **37:** John 6:44, John 6:65, Philippians 1:29, Ephesians 2:8-9, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 16:17, Acts 16:14. **38:** John 3:18.

4. God's Creation of All Things

4.1 We believe that God created the universe, and everything in it,³⁹ out of nothing,⁴⁰ by the Word of His power. Having no deficiency in Himself, nor moved by any incompleteness in His joyful self-sufficiency,⁴¹ God was pleased in creation to display His glory⁴² for the everlasting joy⁴³ of the redeemed, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.⁴⁴

39: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 24:1-2. **40:** Hebrews 11:3, Hebrews 1:2, John 1:1-3. **41:** Exodus 3:13-14, Psalm 50:9-15, Acts 17:24-25. **42:** Isaiah 43:7, Romans 1:20. **43:** Isaiah 35:10, Matthew 25:23. **44:** Revelation 5:9, Revelation 7:9-10.

4.2 We believe that 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;⁴⁵ that they were created male and female equally in the image of God,⁴⁶ without sin;⁴⁷ that they were created to glorify⁴⁸ 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 type of Christ and the church.⁴⁹

45: Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 2:21-22, 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Corinthians 15:45, Romans 5:14. **46:** Genesis 1:27, Genesis 9:6, James 3:9. **47:** Genesis 1:31. **48:** See note 44. **49:** Ephesians 5:22-33,

Genesis 2:18.

- 4.3 We believe there is no final conflict between the Bible and the natural sciences when all the facts are rightly understood. We reject theories of creation and evolution whose ultimate reasoning is any authority over the Bible.⁵⁰ We believe that God created the universe and everything in it in the span of six literal days.⁵¹ We believe God is the originator of all things by the power of His Word, is directly involved in sustaining and upholding the material world, and is the direct driving force behind change and development within the material world.⁵²
50: See notes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. **51:** *Genesis 1:31-2:3, Exodus 20:11.* **52:** See notes 5, 6, and 24-30.

5. Man's Sin and Fall from Fellowship with God

- 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,⁵³ and chose to take what was forbidden,⁵⁴ and thus declare his independence from, distrust for, and disobedience toward his all-good and gracious Creator. Thus, our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original innocence and communion with God.⁵⁵
53: *Ecclesiastes 7:29, Genesis 3:1, Genesis 3:13, 2 Corinthians 11:3.* **54:** *Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:6.* **55:** *Genesis 3:7-8, Romans 5:12, 1 Corinthians 15:21.*
- 5.2 We believe that, as the head of the human race, Adam's fall became the fall of all his posterity, in such a way that corruption, guilt, death, and condemnation belong properly to every person.⁵⁶ All persons are thus corrupt by nature,⁵⁷ enslaved to sin,⁵⁸ and morally unable to delight in God⁵⁹ and thus choose their own proud preference for the fleeting pleasures of self-rule.⁶⁰
56: *Romans 5:12-19.* **57:** *Ephesians 2:1-3.* **58:** *Romans 6:16, 20.* **59:** *1 Corinthians 2:14, Romans 8:7-8, Deuteronomy 29:4.* **60:** *James 4:1-2, Romans 1:18-19, Romans 1:32.*
- 5.3 We believe 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.⁶¹
61: *Genesis 3:16-19, Romans 5:12, Romans 8:18-25, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Romans 8:35-36, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Romans 2:4.*

6. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God

- 6.1 We believe that in the fullness of time⁶² God sent forth His eternal Son as Jesus the Messiah,⁶³ conceived by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁴ born of the virgin Mary.⁶⁵ We believe that, when the eternal Son became flesh,⁶⁶ He took on a fully human nature,⁶⁷ 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 is truly God⁶⁸ and truly man,⁶⁹ one Messiah and the only Mediator between God and man.⁷⁰
62: *Galatians 4:4.* **63:** *John 3:16-17, Matthew 16:16.* **64:** *Luke 1:34-35.* **65:** *Matthew 1:23; see also Luke 1:34-35.* **66:** *John 1:14.* **67:** *Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17.* **68:** See note 13. **69:** See notes 65 and 66; *Philippians 2:6-8.* **70:** *1 Timothy 2:5.*

6.2 We believe that Jesus Christ lived without sin, though He endured the common infirmities and temptations of human life.⁷¹ He preached and taught with truth and authority unparalleled in human history.⁷² He worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation: dispatching demons,⁷³ healing the sick,⁷⁴ raising the dead,⁷⁵ stilling the storm,⁷⁶ walking on water,⁷⁷ multiplying loaves,⁷⁸ and foreknowing what would befall Him and His disciples,⁷⁹ including the betrayal of Judas⁸⁰ and His own death and resurrection.⁸¹
71: Hebrews 4:15. **72:** John 7:46, Mark 1:27, Matthew 22:16. **73:** Mark 1:27. **74:** Matthew 4:23. **75:** Matthew 11:4-6. **76:** Mark 4:39. **77:** Matthew 14:25. **78:** Matthew 14:19-20. **79:** John 13:19. **80:** John 6:64, John 13:21, John 13:26, Matthew 26:2, John 13:27. **81:** Mark 8:31, John 2:19-22, Mark 10:33-34.

6.3 We believe that 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,⁸² such as the Seed of the woman,⁸³ the Prophet like Moses,⁸⁴ the Priest after the order of Melchizedek,⁸⁵ the Son of David,⁸⁶ and the Suffering Servant.⁸⁷
82: Luke 24:25-27. **83:** Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20. **84:** Deuteronomy 18:18, Acts 3:19-23. **85:** Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:5-6. **86:** Isaiah 9:7, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 22:42. **87:** Isaiah 52:13, 53:3-6, Mark 10:45.

6.4 We believe that Jesus Christ suffered voluntarily⁸⁸ in fulfillment of God's redemptive plan,⁸⁹ that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate,⁹⁰ that He died,⁹¹ was buried⁹² and on the third day rose from the dead⁹³ to vindicate of His life and death⁹⁴ and to take His place as the invincible, everlasting Lord of glory.⁹⁵ During forty days after His resurrection, He gave many compelling evidences of His bodily resurrection⁹⁶ and then ascended bodily into heaven,⁹⁷ where He is seated at the right hand of the Father,⁹⁸ interceding for His people⁹⁹ on the basis of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin, and reigning until He puts all His enemies under His feet.¹⁰⁰
88: John 10:18. **89:** Acts 2:23. **90:** Acts 4:27-28. **91:** John 19:30, 1 Corinthians 15:3. **92:** John 19:40-41, 1 Corinthians 15:4. **93:** 1 Corinthians 15:4, Matthew 28:6. **94:** Romans 4:25. **95:** Philippians 2:9-11, Acts 17:31. **96:** Acts 1:3. **97:** Acts 1:9-11. **98:** Luke 22:69, Acts 2:33, Acts 5:31, Colossians 3:1. **99:** Romans 8:34, Hebrews 4:14, 1 John 2:1. **100:** 1 Corinthians 15:25, Hebrews 1:13.

7. The Saving Work of Christ

7.1 We believe that by His perfect obedience to God¹⁰¹ and by His suffering and death¹⁰² as the immaculate Lamb of God,¹⁰³ Jesus Christ obtained forgiveness of sins¹⁰⁴ and the gift of perfect righteousness¹⁰⁵ for all who trusted in God prior to the cross¹⁰⁶ and all who would trust in Christ thereafter.¹⁰⁷ Through living a perfect life and dying in our place, the just for the unjust, Christ bore our sins,¹⁰⁸ received our punishment,¹⁰⁹ appeased the wrath of God against us,¹¹⁰ vindicated the righteousness of God in our justification,¹¹¹ and removed the condemnation of the law against us.¹¹²
101: Romans 5:18-19. **102:** 1 Corinthians 15:3, 1 Peter 2:24, 1 Peter 3:18, Romans 3:24-25, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Romans 5:6, Romans 8:34, Romans 14:9, Galatians 2:21. **103:** John 1:29. **104:** Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Acts 13:38. **105:** 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9, Romans 3:21-22. **106:** Romans 4:3, Romans 3:25-26. **107:** Romans 3:26, Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16. **108:** 1 Peter 2:24. **109:** Romans 8:1, 3, Galatians 3:13. **110:** Ephesians 2:3-6, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Romans 5:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. **111:** Romans 3:25-26. **112:** Colossians 2:13-14, Galatians 3:13.

7.2 We believe that 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.¹¹³ Whosoever will may come¹¹⁴ for cleansing at this fountain, and whoever does come, Jesus will not cast out.¹¹⁵

113: *John 3:16, Matthew 28:19, Colossians 1:23, Acts 1:8. 114:* *Revelation 22:17, KJV, John 4:14. 115:* *John 6:37.*

- 7.3 We believe, moreover, that the death of Christ did obtain more than the bona fide offer of the gospel for all; it also obtained the omnipotent New Covenant¹¹⁶ mercy of repentance¹¹⁷ and faith¹¹⁸ for God's elect. In His death, Christ expressed a special covenant love to His friends,¹¹⁹ His sheep,¹²⁰ His bride.¹²¹ For them He obtained the infallible and effectual working of the Spirit to triumph over their resistance and bring them to saving faith.¹²²

116: *Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25, Hebrews 8:6, Hebrews 9:15; see also 12:24, Hebrews 13:20-21. 117:* *See note 36. 118:* *See note 37. 119:* *John 15:13. 120:* *John 10:14-15. 121:* *Ephesians 5:25. 122:* *Revelation 5:9, John 17:6, 9, 19, John 11:51-52, Romans 8:32.*

8. The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit

- 8.1 We believe that the Holy Spirit has always been at work in the world, sharing in the work of creation,¹²³ awakening faith in the remnant of God's people,¹²⁴ performing signs and wonders,¹²⁵ giving triumphs in battle,¹²⁶ empowering the preaching of prophets¹²⁷ and inspiring the writing of Scripture.¹²⁸ Yet, when Christ had made atonement for sin and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He inaugurated a new era through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Church in accord with the promise of the Father.¹²⁹

123: *Psalm 104:30, Gen. 1:2. 124:* *Romans 8:7-9. 125:* *Judges 14:6. 126:* *Judges 3:10. 127:* *1 Samuel 10:6. 128:* *See note 1; 2 Peter 1:21, Matthew 22:43, referring to Psalm 110:1. 129:* *Luke 24:49, Acts 2:33.*

- 8.2 We believe that the newness of this era is marked by the unprecedented mission of the Spirit to glorify the crucified and risen Christ.¹³⁰ This He does by giving the disciples of Jesus greater power to preach the gospel of the glory of Christ,¹³¹ by opening the hearts of hearers that they might see Christ and believe,¹³² by revealing the beauty of Christ in His Word and transforming His people from glory to glory,¹³³ by manifesting Himself in spiritual gifts (being sovereignly free to dispense all the gifts as He wills) for the building up of the body of Christ¹³⁴ and the confirmation of His Word,¹³⁵ by bringing the power of the gospel of Christ to every nation,¹³⁶ and, in all this, thus fulfilling the New Covenant promise to create and preserve a purified people¹³⁷ for the everlasting habitation of God.¹³⁸

130: *John 16:13-14, John 7:39. 131:* *Acts 1:8. 132:* *Romans 15:18-19, Acts 16:14, John 3:8. 133:* *2 Corinthians 3:17-18. 134:* *1 Corinthians 12:7-10, Hebrews 2:4. 135:* *Hebrews 2:3-4. 136:* *Acts 1:8, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Romans 15:18-19, Acts 13:2, Acts 4:31. 137:* *Jeremiah 31:33-34, Jeremiah 32:40. 138:* *2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21.*

- 8.3 We believe that, apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one would come to faith,¹³⁹ because all are dead in trespasses and sins,¹⁴⁰ and they are hostile to God, and morally unable to submit to God or please Him,¹⁴¹ but choose to reject Him and pursue the pleasures of sin.¹⁴² For God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance,¹⁴³ regenerates the dead,¹⁴⁴ removes blindness,¹⁴⁵ and manifests Christ in such a compellingly beautiful way through the Gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive to the regenerate heart.¹⁴⁶

139: *See notes 35-37. 140:* *Ephesians 2:4-6. 141:* *Romans 8:7-8. 142:* *Ephesians 2:3, Mark 4:19, 1 Peter*

2:4, Jude 1:4. **143:** Romans 6:17, Romans 8:7-9. **144:** See note 139. **145:** 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. **146:** 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 6:37, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Titus 3:4-5.

8.4 We believe the Holy Spirit does this saving work in connection with the presentation of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.¹⁴⁷ Thus 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 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.¹⁴⁸ The Spirit binds His saving work to the gospel of Christ, because His aim is to glorify the Christ of the Gospel.¹⁴⁹ Therefore we do not believe that there is salvation through any other means than through receiving the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁰

147: Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:4, 6. **148:** Acts 13:48. **149:** John 16:14. **150:** Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5, Romans 3:19-22, Ephesians 3:6, Romans 1:5, Acts 17:30-31, Romans 10:13-15.

9. The Justifying Act of God

9.1 We believe that in a free act of righteous grace God justifies the ungodly by faith alone apart from works,¹⁵¹ pardoning their sins,¹⁵² and reckoning them as righteous and acceptable in His presence.¹⁵³ We believe that this simple, powerful reality of justifying faith is God's gift¹⁵⁴ which He gives unconditionally in accord with His electing love,¹⁵⁵ so that no one can boast in himself,¹⁵⁶ but only give all glory to God for every part of salvation.¹⁵⁷ Faith is thus the sole instrument¹⁵⁸ 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.¹⁵⁹ This acceptance happens fully and permanently at the first instant of justification.¹⁶⁰ Thus the righteousness by which we come into right standing with God is not anything worked in us by God, neither imparted to us at baptism nor over time, but rather is accomplished for us, outside ourselves, and is imputed to us.¹⁶¹

151: Titus 3:5-7, Romans 3:28, Romans 3:23-24, Romans 4:4-5, Galatians 2:16, Romans 5:1, Galatians 3:24, Galatians 5:4, Philippians 3:8-9. **152:** Romans 4:6-8. **153:** See note 104. **154:** See notes 35-37. **155:** 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 8:29-30. **156:** Ephesians 2:8-9, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. **157:** Romans 15:18, 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 1 Corinthians 4:7, Hebrews 13:21, Romans 11:36. **158:** See note 149; Romans 3:28, Romans 4:4-5. **159:** Romans 5:18-19, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 3:9, Jeremiah 23:5-6. **160:** Romans 5:1, Romans 5:9, Romans 8:30, Romans 8:33-34. **161:** Philippians 3:9, Romans 3:21-22, Acts 10:43.

9.2 We believe that justifying faith trusts in Christ not only for the gift of imputed righteousness and the forgiveness of sins,¹⁶² but also for the fulfillment of all His promises to us based on that reconciliation.¹⁶³ Justifying faith does not divide Christ, accepting part of Him and rejecting the rest, but rather embraces Christ in all His roles:¹⁶⁴ Creator,¹⁶⁵ Sustainer,¹⁶⁶ Savior,¹⁶⁷ Teacher,¹⁶⁸ Guide,¹⁶⁹ Comforter,¹⁷⁰ Helper,¹⁷¹ Friend,¹⁷² Advocate,¹⁷³ Protector,¹⁷⁴ and Lord.¹⁷⁵ All of Christ is embraced by justifying faith, even before we fully understand all that He is. As more of Christ is truly revealed to us in His Word, genuine faith recognizes Christ and embraces Him more fully.¹⁷⁶ We believe that this embracing of all of Christ is not a mere intellectual assent, or a mere decision of the will, but is also a heartfelt, Spirit-given (yet imperfect) satisfaction in all that God is for us in Jesus.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, repentance, a change of mind and heart that turns from the moral ugliness and danger of sin, is included in the very

nature of saving faith.¹⁷⁸

162: John 3:16, Romans 10:9-11, Romans 5:18-21, Romans 10:3-4, Philippians 3:8-9, 1 Peter 3:18. **163:** Romans 4:20-22, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 3:6, Romans 6:8, 1 Timothy 1:16, 2 Corinthians 1:20. **164:** Romans 10:9, 1 John 3:23, Acts 20:21, Galatians 2:16, Colossians 1:4, Colossians 2:5, 2 Timothy 3:15, John 20:31, Philippians 1:29. **165:** John 1:1-3. **166:** Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3. **167:** Luke 2:11. **168:** John 13:13. **169:** Acts 16:7. **170:** John 14:18, John 14:27, 2 Corinthians 1:5. **171:** Philippians 1:18-19. **172:** John 15:13-15. **173:** 1 John 2:1. **174:** 2 Thessalonians 3:3. **175:** Romans 10:9. **176:** Philippians 3:15. **177:** John 6:35, 1 John 5:1-4, John 3:19-21, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:24-26. **178:** Matthew 3:8, Hebrews 6:1.

9.3 We believe that the faith, which alone receives the gift of justification, does not remain alone in the person so justified, but produces, by the Holy Spirit,¹⁷⁹ the fruit of love¹⁸⁰ and leads necessarily to sanctification.¹⁸¹ The faith which alone justifies, cannot remain alone, but works through love.¹⁸² This necessary relation between justifying faith and the fruit of good works gives rise to some Biblical expressions which seem to make works the ground or means of justification, but in fact simply express the crucial truth that faith that does not yield the fruit of good works is dead, being no true faith.¹⁸³

179: Galatians 5:22-23. **180:** Galatians 5:6, 1 Timothy 1:5, Colossians 1:4-5, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 4:8, 20, 1 John 4:16. **181:** 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Acts 26:18, 2 Thessalonians 1:11, James 2:17, James 2:26, Acts 15:9, 1 John 2:3-4, 1 John 5:1. **182:** James 2:17-20, 26. **183:** Hebrews 12:14, Romans 8:13-14, Galatians 5:19-21, Galatians 6:8-9, John 5:28-29, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Matthew 18:34-35, James 2:21-25.

10. God's Work in Sanctification

10.1 We believe that God's sanctification of believers is a past, present, and future reality in which we are made partakers of God's holiness.¹⁸⁴ In justification, God grants the believer positional sanctification in which he is set apart for God's purposes, declared to be holy, and identified as a saint.¹⁸⁵ For as long as the believer lives, God grants him progressive sanctification as he becomes transformed more and more into the image of Christ by faith in Christ, through obedience to the Word of God, and through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁶ When the believer dies God grants him perfected (or completed) sanctification in which he is fully transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, fully experiencing the righteousness and holiness which belong to the Son of God.¹⁸⁷

184: Romans 8:29-30, Romans 12:2, Philippians 3:20-21. **185:** Romans 8:29-30, 1 Corinthians 6:11. **186:** Romans 6:11-14, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Philippians 2:12-13, Philippians 3:12-14, 2 Corinthians 5:9. **187:** Philippians 1:6, Philippians 3:20-21.

10.2 We believe that progressive sanctification, which comes by the Spirit through faith,¹⁸⁸ is never complete in this earthly life and all claims of eradicating sin are unscriptural.¹⁸⁹ Although slavery to sin is broken,¹⁹⁰ and sinful desires are progressively¹⁹¹ weakened by the power of a superior satisfaction in the glory of Christ, yet there remain remnants of corruption in every heart that give rise to irreconcilable war,¹⁹² and call for vigilance in the lifelong fight of faith.¹⁹³

188: Galatians 3:5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13. **189:** Philippians 3:12, 1 John 1:8-10, 1 John 2:1, Matthew 6:11-12, Romans 6:11-13, Galatians 5:16-18. **190:** Romans 6:14, Romans 6:17. **191:** 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Hebrews 10:14, 2 Peter 3:18. **192:** Galatians 5:16-18, 1 Peter 2:11. **193:** Hebrews 3:12-13, 1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

10.3 We believe that all who are justified will win this fight. They will persevere in faith and never surrender to the enemy of their souls.¹⁹⁴ This perseverance is the promise of the New

Covenant,¹⁹⁵ obtained by the blood of Christ,¹⁹⁶ and worked in us by God Himself,¹⁹⁷ yet not so as to diminish, but only to empower and encourage, our vigilance,¹⁹⁸ so that we may say in the end, I have fought the good fight,¹⁹⁹ but it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me.²⁰⁰

194: Mark 13:22, Luke 22:31-32, John 10:27-30, Romans 8:30, Hebrews 3:14, 1 John 2:19, 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, 2 Timothy 1:12, 1 Peter 1:5. **195:** Jeremiah 32:40. **196:** 1 Corinthians 11:25. **197:** Hebrews 13:20-21. **198:** Philippians 2:12-13. **199:** 2 Timothy 4:7-8. **200:** 1 Corinthians 15:10.

11. Our Work in Sanctification

11.1 We believe that God's work of sanctification includes motivating and empowering believers to participate in sanctification through God-ordained means.²⁰¹ An exhaustive list of the means of sanctification is beyond the scope of this document, but several essential means include God's Word, prayer, corporate worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, watchfulness, repentance, and obedience.²⁰²

201: Philippians 2:12-13. **202:** James 1:21-22, Colossians 4:2, Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 5:13-14, 2 Corinthians 7:10.

11.2 We believe that faith is especially strengthened by God's Spirit²⁰³ through prayerful²⁰⁴ study and meditation in His Word.²⁰⁵ Meditation- reading,²⁰⁶ understanding,²⁰⁷ pondering,²⁰⁸ memorizing,²⁰⁹ and savoring²¹⁰ the promises of God is a primary means of the Holy Spirit to break the power of sin's deceitful promises and to display the superior pleasures of pleasing God. Therefore it is needful that we give ourselves to such meditation day and night.²¹¹

203: See notes 35-37. **204:** Mark 9:24, Luke 22:31-32, Ephesians 1:18-19, 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:11. **205:** Romans 10:17, Ephesians 6:17-18, Hebrews 4:12, Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 119:36, Psalm 119:18, Psalm 86:11, 2 Peter 1:3-4, Hebrews 10:34, Hebrews 11:24-26, Hebrews 13:13-14. **206:** Ephesians 3:4. **207:** Ephesians 5:17. **208:** 2 Timothy 2:7. **209:** Psalm 119:11. **210:** Psalm 37:4, Psalm 34:8. **211:** Psalm 1:2.

11.3 We believe that God has ordained to bless²¹² and use²¹³ His people for His glory through the means of prayer,²¹⁴ offered in Jesus' name²¹⁵ by faith.²¹⁶ 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.²¹⁷ God's sovereignty over all things is not a hindrance to prayer, but a reason for hope that our prayers will succeed.²¹⁸ God ordained prayer to be active in sanctifying His people,²¹⁹ sending gospel laborers into the world,²²⁰ and causing the Word of God to spread and triumph over Satan and unbelief.²²¹

212: Philippians 4:6-7, Matthew 7:7-11. **213:** Romans 15:30-31, Ephesians 6:19, Matthew 9:38. **214:** Ephesians 3:14-16, Colossians 1:9-11. **215:** John 14:13; see also 15:16; 16:23-24, 26. **216:** James 1:5-8. **217:** Matthew 6:9-10. **218:** Ezekiel 36:37-38. **219:** 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13. **220:** Matthew 9:38. **221:** 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

11.4 We believe that God calls His people to encourage personal and corporate sanctification through regular worship and fellowship with the local church.²²² This focused, corporate worship is to complement a life of individual worship and fellowship manifested by grateful obedience, serving with spiritual gifts, and caring for physical needs.²²³ Likewise, corporate worship and fellowship should overflow in discipleship, helping others to grow in their understanding of God and in faithful obedience to Him.²²⁴

222: Hebrews 10:24-25, Ephesians 4:11-12, Acts 2:42, 46-47. **223:** Acts 2:44-47, Galatians 5:13-14, Hebrews 12:28-29, Romans 12:1. **224:** See note 268; Ephesians 3:14-19, Colossians 1:9-12.

11.5 We believe that God has directed his people to keep watch over their lives, to repent quickly of sin, and to pursue obedience to God's commands.²²⁵ Christians must be constantly watchful of their own heart attitudes and actions, lest they fall into sin.²²⁶ Where sin becomes evident by personal examination or through the aid of others, a Christian must quickly turn from that sin in repentance.²²⁷ At all times, God's people are called to pursue obedience to God for our joy and satisfaction in Him.²²⁸

225: See notes 226-228. **226:** Galatians 6:1, 1 Peter 5:8, Romans 12:2. **227:** See notes 61, 178. **228:** See notes 43, 189, 190, 192.

12.Christ's Church and Her Ordinances

12.1 We believe in the one universal Church, composed of all those, from every place in this age, 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.²²⁹ We believe that the ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God²³⁰ in the everlasting and ever-increasing gladness of worship.²³¹

229: Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 1:22, Ephesians 3:6, Ephesians 4:15-16, Ephesians 5:23. **230:** Ephesians 3:10, Matthew 5:14-16. **231:** Revelation 5:9-12.

12.2 We believe that it is God's will that the universal Church find expression in local churches²³² in which believers agree together to hear the Word of God proclaimed,²³³ to engage in corporate worship,²³⁴ to practice the ordinances of baptism²³⁵ and the Lord's Supper,²³⁶ to build each other's faith through the manifold ministries of love,²³⁷ to hold each other accountable in the obedience of faith through Biblical discipline,²³⁸ and to engage in local and world evangelization.²³⁹ The Church is a body in which each member should find a suitable ministry for His gifts;²⁴⁰ it is the household of God in which the Spirit dwells;²⁴¹ it is the pillar and bulwark of God's truth in a truth-denying world;²⁴² and it is a city set on a hill so that men may see the light of its good deeds—especially to the poor²⁴³—and give glory to the Father in heaven.²⁴⁴

232: Acts 8:1, 1 Corinthians 16:19. **233:** Ephesians 4:11-12, 2 Timothy 4:1-2. **234:** Ephesians 5:18-20, Colossians 3:15-16. **235:** Matthew 28:19. **236:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. **237:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 1 Corinthians 14:26, Romans 12:6-8. **238:** Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:7, 11-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15. **239:** Colossians 4:5-6, Romans 15:24, 3 John 7-8, Matthew 28:18-20. **240:** 1 Corinthians 12:13-18. **241:** Ephesians 2:20-22. **242:** 1 Timothy 3:14-15. **243:** Galatians 2:10, Romans 15:26, Luke 14:13-14. **244:** Matthew 5:14-16.

12.3 We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord by which those who have repented and come to faith²⁴⁵ express their union with Christ²⁴⁶ in His death and resurrection,²⁴⁷ by being immersed in water²⁴⁸ in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹ It is a sign of belonging to the new people of God,²⁵⁰ and an emblem of burial²⁵¹ and cleansing,²⁵² signifying death to the old life of unbelief, and purification from the pollution of sin.²⁵³

245: Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21, Galatians 3:26-27, Acts 2:38, Acts 18:8, Matthew 3:6. **246:** 1 Corinthians 12:13. **247:** Romans 6:3-4. **248:** Acts 8:36-39, John 3:23, Romans 6:4. **249:** Matthew 28:19. **250:** Romans 6:3-5, Romans 2:28-29, Romans 4:16, Galatians 3:7, Mark 1:4-5. **251:** See note 247. **252:** Hebrews 10:22. **253:** See notes 247 and 252.

12.4 We believe that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Lord²⁵⁴ in which gathered believers²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶ We do this in remembrance of the Lord, and thus proclaim His death until He comes.²⁵⁷ 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.²⁵⁸ Such celebration of the Lord's Supper both reminds of and results in unity and oneness of the body of Christ.²⁵⁹

254: See note 236. **255:** 1 Corinthians 11:17-22. **256:** See note 236. **257:** See note 236. **258:** 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, John 6:53-57, 63. **259:** 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

12.5 We believe that each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of pastor-elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer.²⁶⁰ Women are not to fill the role of pastor-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.²⁶¹ The church should likewise appoint spiritually qualified deacons who will serve and care for the church.²⁶²

260: Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 14:23, Acts 6:4, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7. **261:** See note 260; 1 Timothy 2:12-13. **262:** 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

13.Christ's Commission to Make Disciples of All Nations

13.1 We believe that the commission given by the Lord Jesus to make disciples of all nations is binding on His Church to the end of the age.²⁶³ This task is to proclaim the Gospel to every tribe and tongue and people and nation,²⁶⁴ baptizing them, teaching them to obey the words and to emulate ways of the Lord,²⁶⁵ and gathering them into churches²⁶⁶ able to fulfill their Christian calling among their own people. The ultimate aim of world missions is to be a means through which God would call to Himself those whom He has chosen to be His worshippers, who then glorify His name through glad-hearted faith and obedience.²⁶⁷ All believers are on mission to make disciples through personal evangelism and discipleship.²⁶⁸ Local congregations are responsible to equip and encourage believers, facilitate evangelism and discipleship, faithfully teach application of biblical truth, and participate in local and distant missions through sending, praying for, and financially supporting missionaries.²⁶⁹

263: Matthew 28:18-20. **264:** Revelation 5:9. **265:** See note 263. **266:** Acts 14:23. **267:** Romans 1:5, John 4:23, Romans 15:8-11. **268:** Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 8:4, 2 Timothy 2:2, Philippians 1:3-4. **269:** See notes 233, 268; Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 5:13-14, Acts 13:1-3, 1 Corinthians 9:14.

14.Death, Resurrection, the Coming of the Lord, and Last Things

14.1 We believe that when Christians die they are made perfect in holiness,²⁷⁰ are received into paradise,²⁷¹ and are taken consciously into the presence of Christ, which is more glorious and more satisfying than any experience on earth.²⁷²

270: Hebrews 12:22-23. **271:** Luke 23:43. **272:** Philippians 1:23; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Revelation 6:9-11. On the issue of whether Paul conceives of the body and soul as separable, see 2 Corinthians 12:2-3.

14.2 We believe in the blessed hope²⁷³ that at the end of the age Jesus Christ will return to this

earth personally,²⁷⁴ visibly,²⁷⁵ physically,²⁷⁶ and suddenly²⁷⁷ in power and great glory;²⁷⁸ and that He will gather His elect,²⁷⁹ judge the nations, establish His kingdom,²⁸⁰ and raise the dead.²⁸¹ We believe that the righteous will enter into the everlasting joy of their Master,²⁸² and those who by their unrighteousness suppressed the truth²⁸³ will be consigned to everlasting conscious misery.²⁸⁴

273: Titus 2:13. **274:** Acts 1:9-11. **275:** Mark 14:61-62. **276:** See note 273; Philippians 3:20-21, Luke 24:39-43. **277:** 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. **278:** Luke 21:27. **279:** Matthew 24:31. **280:** 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, 2 Timothy 4:1, Luke 22:28-30. **281:** 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. **282:** Psalm 16:11, Matthew 25:23, Matthew 25:46, Matthew 19:29, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, Jude 24-25. **283:** Romans 1:18. **284:** Daniel 12:2, Matthew 3:12; see also 18:8; 10:28; 12:32; 25:41, 46; 26:24; Mark 3:29; 9:43-48; Luke 16:26; Jude 12-13, 2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 14:11; see also 19:3; 20:10.

14.3 We believe that 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, as God displays more and more of His infinite and inexhaustible greatness and glory for the enjoyment of His people.²⁸⁵

285: Ephesians 2:6-7, Psalm 16:11, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Corinthians 2:9.

15. Angels, Satan, and Demons

15.1 We believe that all angels were created by God for His glory and to fulfill His purposes.²⁸⁶ Thus, angels are subordinate creatures, servants of God, and they are not to be worshipped.²⁸⁷

286: Psalm 148:1-2, 5, Colossians 1:16. **287:** Psalm 103:20, Hebrews 1:14, Revelation 19:9-10, Matthew 25:41.

15.2 We believe that one angel, Satan, also called the devil and the serpent, rebelled against God²⁸⁸ and will continue to war against God until he is cast into the lake of fire at the judgment.²⁸⁹ At the time of Satan's rebellion, a multitude of angels rebelled with him.²⁹⁰ These fallen angels, Satan and his demons, actively seek to blind the minds of unbelievers, deceive individual believers, and destroy the church.²⁹¹

288: Ezekiel 28:11-19, Isaiah 14:12-15. **289:** Isaiah 14:15, Revelation 20:10. **290:** Matthew 12:24-29, Ephesians 2:1-2, Mark 9:25, Matthew 25:41, Revelation 12:7-12. **291:** Revelation 16:13-14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Ephesians 6:10-12, 2 Corinthians 4:4.

15.3 We believe that unwary believers may be influenced by demonic activity in the world around them, but it is not valid for believers to blame their sinful attitudes or actions on demons.²⁹²

The sealing and indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes it impossible for a demon to indwell or control a believer.²⁹³ Christians must be vigilant to resist the devil, and he will flee.²⁹⁴

Ultimately, God's people should not be overly fearful or consumed by thoughts of demonic activity, since Satan and his demons are impotent to destroy God's church or individual Christians because of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁵

292: 1 John 5:18, Romans 14:10, Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10. **293:** Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 6:15-16, 1 Corinthians 6:19. **294:** James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9, Ephesians 6:10-12. **295:** 1 John 5:18.

16. Continuation versus Cessation of Sign Gifts

16.1 We believe that there is and will continue to be healthy debate among Christian brothers regarding cessation versus continuation of sign gifts in normative church life. We do not wish

to make this issue a point of separation from other believers, but for the sake of order in this church, this statement clarifies the understanding of our church leadership.²⁹⁶

296: See notes 240, 242; *John 13:34-35*.

16.2 We believe the supernatural “sign” gifts of the New Testament functioned to fulfill prophecy and to authenticate the apostles’ ministry and message.²⁹⁷ Historically, these gifts were not practiced in a normative sense after the church was established and the Word of God completed at the conclusion the apostolic age.²⁹⁸ We do not believe these gifts are present in a normative manner for the Church today, especially in the sense of a person being equipped for their independent exercise.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, God remains the God of miracles, and in His sovereign purposes, and for the sake of the glory of His name among the nations, He may choose to empower a believer to exercise a miraculous, supernatural phenomena in specific settings, for the sake of the Gospel, the conversion of souls.³⁰⁰

297: *Ephesians 2:20*. **298:** *1 Corinthians 13:8-10*. **299:** *1 Peter 4:9-11*. **300:** *Job 38:1-4, Romans 11:33-36*.

16.3 While brothers may disagree on the presence of gifts, we can agree that the authenticity of an expression of these gifts must be guided by the principle that God does not contradict himself, that God is a God of order and not confusion, and that no new doctrines are being revealed beyond the canon of Scripture.³⁰¹

301: See notes 1-4; *1 Corinthians 14:33, 40, Titus 1:2, Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:13, Jude 1:3, Revelation 22:18-19*.

17. The Spirit of This Affirmation and the Unity of the Church

17.1 We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight, some being more essential, some less. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order for one to be saved or in order to be embraced a member of this church.

17.2 Our aim is not to discover how little can be believed, but rather to embrace and teach the whole counsel of God.³⁰² Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth,³⁰³ and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion³⁰⁴ and strengthens the church in her mission to meet the great systems of false religion and secularism. We believe that the supreme virtue of love is nourished by the strong meat of God-centered doctrine.³⁰⁵ And we believe that a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ is sustained in an atmosphere of deep and joyful knowledge of God and His wonderful works.³⁰⁶

302: *Acts 20:27*. **303:** *Titus 1:1, 1 Timothy 6:3-5, 1 Timothy 4:1*. **304:** *Ephesians 4:13-14*. **305:** *1 Timothy 1:5*. **306:** *Psalms 9:10*.

17.3 We believe that the cause of unity in the church³⁰⁷ 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 church or school or mission or ministry, seeking the unity that comes from the truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other³⁰⁸ across boundaries rather than by removing boundaries. In this way, the importance of truth is served by the existence of doctrinal borders, and unity is served by the way we love others across those borders.

307: Ephesians 4:4-6. **308:** John 13:34-35.

17.4 We do not claim infallibility for this affirmation and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture.³⁰⁹ 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.³¹⁰ As conversation and debate take 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.

309: 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Peter 3:18. **310:** Acts 17:11.

* * *

NOTE: The many Biblical descriptions of God's work in salvation are diverse. Therefore, similar or identical terms may be used differently in different contexts. Our aim in this affirmation of faith is not to limit how Biblical writers can use the terms we use here, or to say that the terms of this affirmation may not be used differently by the Biblical writers in various contexts, but rather our aim is to claim that the reality described here is in fact Biblical reality.

NOTE: This Statement is heavily adapted from the Elder Affirmations of Faith for Bethlehem Baptist Church (Minneapolis, MN) and Christ Community Church (Houston, TX).

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