



STATEMENT OF FAITH

November 19, 2023

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As a body of God's believing children, the faith of this congregation is in God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Statement of Faith does not in any way replace Holy Scripture or exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself is the inspired and infallible Word of God and is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We do believe that the following Statement of Faith accurately represents the teachings of the Bible and is binding upon all members. Accordingly, everything that we endeavor to do shall be in accord with this Statement of Faith. The Statement of Faith establishes what we believe constitutes the essential doctrines that are foundational to our faith in Christ and shall be the guiding principles by which we as a church will function in all aspects of ministry. When it comes to faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Elders are Bethlehem Community Church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

A. The Bible:

1. We believe that the Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, was given by divine inspiration and is the complete and divine revelation of God to mankind and the very Word of God.
2. We believe the Scriptures are inerrant, infallible, God-breathed, and are the final authority for faith and life.
3. We believe the Scriptures shall be interpreted according to the normal grammatical, historical, literal, and contextual meaning.

Ref: 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Rev. 22:18-19

B. The Godhead:

1. We believe in one unchangeable triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that they are each co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory.
3. We believe that they have the same attributes and perfections and are harmonious in the execution of their distinct offices.

Ref: Gen. 1:1-3; Matt. 28:19; John 14:10, 15:26

C. The Person and Work of God the Father:

1. We believe in the person of God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love.
2. We believe that God the Father concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of mankind.
3. We believe that God the Father hears and answers prayer.
4. We believe that God the Father saves from sin and death all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

Ref: Ps. 90:2, John 3:16; Matt. 6:9-15

D. The Person and Work of Christ:

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, the Word made flesh, became man, without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem us from sin.
2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a representative, substitutionary sacrifice, and that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead.
3. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate.
4. We believe that Jesus is coming back personally and visibly to complete His saving work and to consummate the eternal plan of God.

Ref: Matt. 25:31-46; John 1:1-2; Heb. 7:24-25, 9:24; Rom. 3:24-25, 4:25; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Phil 2:5-11; Luke 2:29-35

E. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit:

1. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He is the Supernatural Agent of regeneration, indwelling and sealing believers unto the day of redemption.
2. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher who assists believers to understand and apply the Scriptures. He instructs, comforts, and guides God's children. He sanctifies them, empowers them for life and service, and quickens their mortal bodies. It is the privilege and duty of all the believers to be filled with the Spirit.
3. We believe that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer and will encourage the use of gifts for the edification of the body of Christ.

Ref: John 14:26, 16:8-11; Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:11,28; Eph. 1:13-14, 4:7-12, 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 2:26-27

F. Creation:

1. We believe that the Genesis account of creation is neither allegory nor myth, but a literal, historical account of God's creation of the universe in six literal, consecutive 24-hour periods.
2. We believe that all nonliteral interpretations including evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution are unscriptural theories of origin.

Ref: Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:11

G. Mankind:

1. We believe that by a special act, God created man and woman in the image and likeness of God, possessing personality and innocence, and that the purpose of their creation was to glorify God.
2. We believe that God, desiring loving relationship with His greatest creation, gave

Adam and Eve the gift of choice. Given the opportunity to lovingly obey God's command or follow Satan's rebellion, Adam and Eve sinned, causing spiritual and physical death to enter creation.

3. We believe that because of Adam and Eve's sin, the entire human race became involved in guilt and corruption so that in every heart there is an evil disposition which leads to acts of sin and to justifiable condemnation. Mankind is totally depraved and utterly unable to remedy their lost condition.
4. We believe that mankind is granted one life from conception to physical death at which time a person's destiny is fixed based upon their confession of faith in or rejection of the truth of Christ. We believe that physical death marks the boundary of the human opportunity to be saved. We reject all theories of reincarnation or theories of postmortem salvation as unscriptural.

Ref: Gen. 1:27, 3:1-6; Rom. 3:10-12, 5:12; 1 John 1:8-10; Heb. 9:27; Job 14:5

H. Salvation:

1. We believe that the sin nature is passed on to all people, resulting in spiritual death, the consequence of which is separation between mankind and a perfect and holy God.
2. We believe that in His love for us, God made a way for us to be made right in His sight by an act of grace brought to those who have faith in Christ.
3. We believe that Jesus' precious blood was shed on the Cross for the forgiveness of our sins.
4. We believe that salvation occurs when one hears the Gospel of Christ, repents of their sins and calls upon the name of The Lord, placing faith in Christ and surrendering their life to His Lordship.
5. We believe that having been justified by faith and having received the Holy Spirit, the true believer receives the spirit of adoption, undergoes a spiritual rebirth where they pass from death to life, and are led in righteousness as they surrender to His will.
6. We believe that salvation is the free gift of God by faith alone in Christ alone, not by works, so that no one may boast of their ability to earn salvation.

Ref: John 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Acts 2:37-38; Rom. 3:23, 5:8, 8:15-17, 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9

I. Perseverance of the Believers:

1. We believe that those who are truly born again will continue trusting in Christ forever.
2. We believe that when we are born again, we receive the promised indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that is God's guarantee that He who began a good work in us will complete it.
3. We believe that God, by His own power through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, keeps and preserves the believer forever.
4. We believe that nothing can separate the believer from the love of Christ.

5. We believe that God makes everything work together for the good of those who love Him.
6. We believe that all who God saves will be glorified.

Ref: Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 1:6, 2:13; Rom. 5, 6, 8:28-39

J. Heaven:

1. We believe in a literal, physical place called heaven.
2. We believe the Bible teaches that heaven is a definite place reserved for true believers.
3. We believe the saved will spend eternity with Jesus Christ in heaven, which is indescribably beautiful and where there will be no more pain, no more tears, and no more sin.

Ref: Matt. 5:19, 25:46; Rev. 21:3-5, 22:1-5

K. The Church:

1. We believe that the local New Testament Church is a group of born-again believers, the bride of Christ, under the headship of Christ, banded together for prayer, teaching, encouragement, fellowship, and to worship and observe the sacraments as commanded by Christ.
2. We believe that the command to give the gospel to the lost is clear in the Scriptures, and that this is the responsibility of all believers.
3. We believe that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament.
4. We believe in the pattern and principles of male leadership and responsibility in the church according to the sacrificial example of Jesus. We believe this limits the role of pastor and elder to qualified men. Additionally, only men are eligible for ordination.
5. We believe in the God-ordained and significant role that women should play in establishing and leading the church. Every leadership opportunity is open to women except those that are excluded by Scripture. The Scriptures clearly state that women are not to serve in church positions in which they exercise authority over men or in which they teach doctrine to men. While the Bible is clear that men and women have different roles, this is not an issue of equality, for men and women are equal under God. Qualified women should serve in any leadership position that is not forbidden in the Scriptures, including giving testimony and sharing from the pulpit.
6. We believe that Christian ordinances are outward rites appointed by Christ, not as a means of salvation, but as visible signs and seals of the facts and realities of salvation.
 - a. **Baptism:** We believe that Baptism by water is the public confession of Christ as Savior and Lord. It is a demonstration of one's union by faith and covenant with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection unto newness of life.

- b. The Lord's Supper: We believe that the Lord's Supper should be observed by all believers in obedience to the command, "Do this in remembrance of Me." It consists of partaking of the bread and wine, which represents the death of Christ for the remission of our sins and our continual dependence upon Him for our sustenance. It witnesses the union of the believer with Christ. The union of believers around the Lord's Table should be open to all who are in right relationship with one another and with the Lord.

Ref: Matt. 16:17-19; 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 1:8, 2:38-41; Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Tim. 2:12, 3:1-7; Rev. 2-3

L. The Personality of Satan:

1. We believe that Satan, having been created an angel, became prideful in his beauty and wanted to sit on a throne above that of God.
2. We believe that because of Satan's pride, God permanently removed him from his exalted position and role and cast him and the other fallen angels out of heaven.
3. We believe that Satan became the ruler of this world and the prince of the power of the air after the fall.
4. We believe that Satan is the author of sin, the father of lies, the accuser, tempter, and deceiver. He is the open and declared enemy of God and mankind.
5. We believe that even though he was cast out of heaven, he still seeks to elevate his throne above God. He counterfeits all that God does, hoping to gain the worship of the world and encourage opposition to God's kingdom.
6. We believe that Satan is the ultimate source behind every false cult and world religion.
7. We believe that Satan will do anything and everything in his power to oppose God and those who follow God.
8. We believe that Satan's fate has been sealed as he and the enemies of God shall be eternally punished in the Lake of Fire.

Ref: Ezek. 28:11-19; Isa. 14:12-17; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; John 8:44; Rev. 12:10, 20:1-3, 10

M. Hell:

1. We believe that hell is a real, physical place. On the day of judgment, those who have rejected Jesus' free gift of salvation will spend eternity there, separated from God.
2. We believe that hell is a place of great darkness, fire and burning sulfur where the souls of those who die in their sin shall be tormented with great pain, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Ref: Matt. 13:41-42, 46; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 2:4

N. Marriage, Sex, and Sexuality:

1. We believe that God wonderfully and perfectly creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect the image and nature of God.

2. We believe that marriage is more than a mere human contract but is a covenant made before God designed by Him as a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one naturally born man and one naturally born woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and His bride the Church.
3. We believe that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage and that no affections, desires, or commitments ever justify any form of sexual immorality.
4. We believe that sin distorts sexual desires by directing people away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality, a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality, which is a perversion of God's gift of sex and are therefore sinful.
5. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's sex by surgery or appearance.
6. We believe that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable the follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, including the power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin and divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.
7. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God, but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home. Men are to be the spiritual head of their home, loving their wives and giving himself up for the cause of his family. Wives are to submit to their husband's spiritual leading as together they submit to the headship of Christ.

Ref: Gen. 1:27, 2:24, 5:2; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21

O. Sanctity of Life:

1. We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image.
2. We believe that human life is of immeasurable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death.
3. We believe that we are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

Ref: Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:22; Ps. 139; Prov. 6:17

P. Church Discipline:

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with the authority and responsibility to discipline members for flagrant sin or serious doctrinal error, with the goal of restoring the offender to a right relationship with Christ and the Church.
2. We believe the threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church, to instruct believers by deterring sin and promoting purity, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by

calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct.

Ref: 1 Tim. 5:20; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5

Q. God's Plan for Israel:

1. We believe that God has a distinct plan for Israel which has not been replaced by the church and that the Old Testament promises to Israel have not been transferred to the church.
2. We believe that the Jewish people remain God's chosen people who shall play a significant role in the end times to come.

Ref: Gen. 12:1-3; Rom. 9-11

R. Last Things:

1. We believe that at the end of the age, Christ will physically and visibly descend from Heaven.
2. We believe that at the end of the age the dead shall be raised and together with those who are living, will be judged by God.
3. We believe that the redeemed will enter into full possession of eternal bliss in the presence of God in heaven, and the wicked shall be condemned to eternal death and separation from God in hell.

Ref: Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 19, 20:11-15